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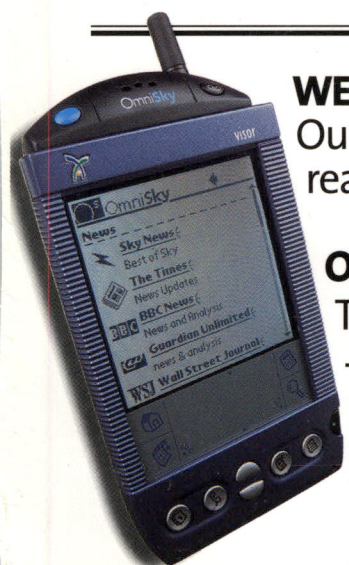
The World's 20 Best Online Stores

We name the ones that deserve your cash

...and the High St giants that don't



WEB WITHOUT WIRES
Our verdict on the first real-time Internet handheld

ONLINE GAMING SPECIAL
Tricks to supercharge your gaming – without spending any cash

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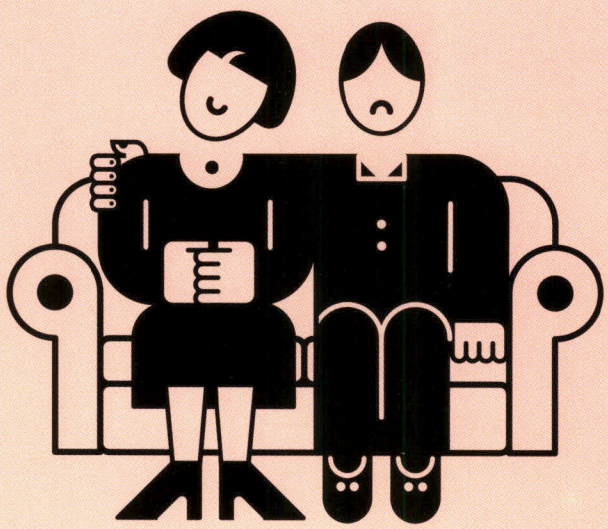

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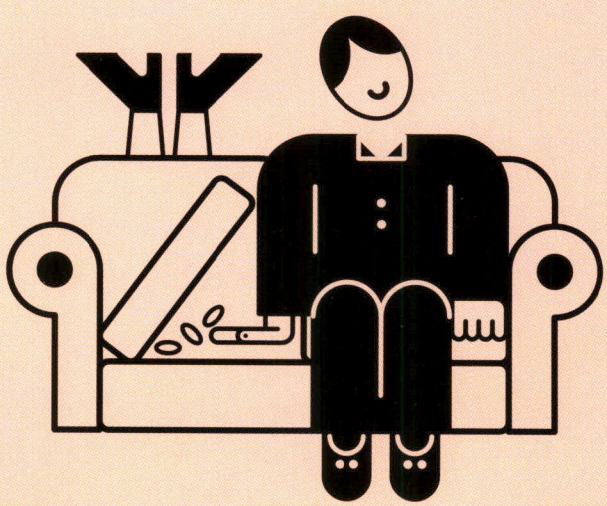

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ESSENTIALS

ABOUT US»

We're sworn to saving you time and money by bringing you the best of the Internet every month – and giving technical advice that will make mastering the Net cheaper and easier.

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If you'd like to have our magazine delivered to your home every month – and save money in the process – just call 01795 414807 (see page 28 for more details).

LIVE 2001»

the net staff will be on hand at Live 2001, the UK's biggest consumer electronics show, at Birmingham NEC on 21-23 Sep. See page 75 for more details.

NEED HELP?»

Got a technical query? Call *the net* helpline on 020 8267 5933 between 2pm and 5pm each Thursday for one-on-one advice, or send an email to ***thenetnow@haynet.com***.

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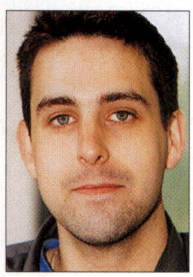
COVER PIC: COLORIFIC

:-) ED'S COMMENT

Whatever happened to the e-commerce failures?



Imagine reaching the checkout in your local supermarket on a Saturday afternoon, laden down with goodies, screaming kids in tow, only to be told your basket had, in fact, been mysteriously emptied. Or that a sudden software failure meant you'd have to go back and start all over again.

You'd quickly conclude supermarkets were a waste of time and fix yourself up with a nice little allotment and a chicken coop instead. Yet all too often, that's the sort of shoddy service we're expected to swallow in the frustrating world that is e-commerce – and it's the names you trust in the high street who are often the least reliable once they dip their toes into the uncharted waters of cyberspace.

For too long, traditional retailers regarded the Web as an insignificant geek's plaything, openly scoffing at claims e-commerce would one day threaten the foundations of their centuries-old empires. And yet they were wrong: half of all Americans have now made an online purchase and the biggest and best Web-only stores have a turnover many high street giants would kill for. Moreover, they provide a very real and effective alternative to everyday shopping. It's the bricks-and-mortar stores whose clicks-and-mortar dreams have crumbled. When we tested the services of several well-known retailers (p36), it became clear that a trusted name counts for little online.

They could learn a lot from the 20 e-commerce success stories we highlight from page 30 – stores where you can splash your cash safely, where the savings to be made, quality of customer service and prompt delivery show what all the fuss was about in the first place. No queues, no screaming kids and no worn shoe leather – who said e-commerce was such a bad idea anyway?

Robert Jeffery, **EDITOR**
robert.jeffery@haynet.com

thismonth»

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Web pioneers who look set to make a mint

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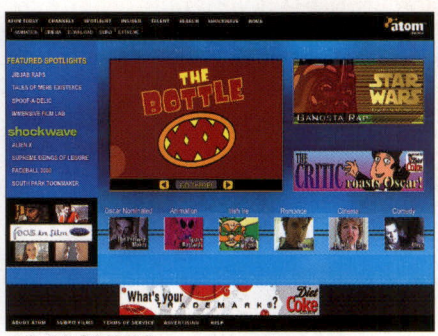
Adventure sports take it to the extreme



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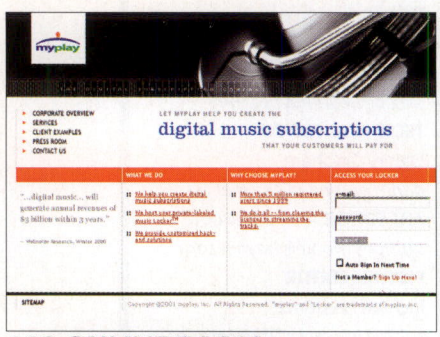

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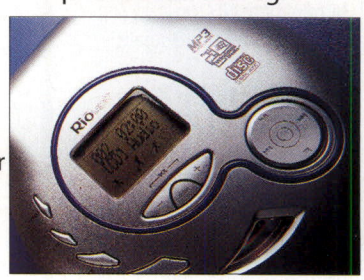
Where can you shop safely and cheaply in the jungle that is e-commerce? We pick 20 sites that bring excellence to cyberspace – plus we test the high street giants whose sites just don't deliver



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Why movie piracy is the new Internet phenomenon

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PICTURE: COLORIFIC

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Friends: the comedy was a pirates' target

Pirates caught streaming top TV shows on the Web

Forget swapping music files – US telly hits are the new Net phenomenon

American film and television studios are preparing for a Napster-like succession of court cases after several sites were found to be illegally streaming television programmes and films over the Net. File sharing sites such as Gnutella have also been threatened with legal action over the swapping of video files through its site.

The controversy centres around 'online VCR' site RecordTV.com – which offered to record shows from major US networks and send them to users – and icraveTV.com, which streamed live shows from the likes of CBS and NBC, home of *Friends*, *Frasier* and *ER*. Foreign viewers could, in theory, watch big-name shows months ahead of their transmission, while domestic fans could keep an eye on the box from work.

The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) has reached a $50,000 settlement with RecordTV after it tried to sue the site for $150,000 last July. The American Broadcasters Association, meanwhile, has forced the closure of icraveTV, although for a while it was still possible to watch the videos if you claimed to be a Canadian citizen and entered a Canadian postcode.

Los Angeles-based RecordTV described itself as 'a pioneer in Internet-based VCR services' and filed a counter-claim maintaining that an online VCR was just as lawful as a hardware one. The site would 'record' programs for users to view as streaming video at a later date. MPAA president Jack Valenti said the site '...had built a business based on offering its customers access to valuable stolen property.'

The battle between major film and television studios and the Web hasn't ended there. In April, the MPAA warned major American ISPs they would have to be more vigilant about the file swapping habits of their users and students. MPAA says many users are violating the Digital Millennium Copyright Act by trading copyrighted films through file-swapping services such as Gnutella (***www.gnutella.co.uk***).

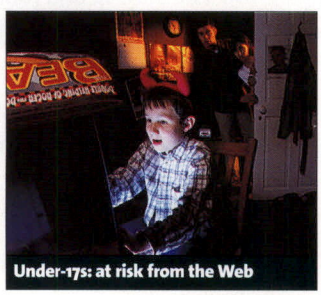
You could see new shows months ahead of their release

Leading ISP Excite promptly sent out correspondence to 20 American users warning them their accounts would be be terminated if their file sharing went on – see page 44 for more details.

Copyright infringement through some file swapping services like Gnutella is difficult to track as there is no central server unlike music swapping site Napster. Instead, the files pass between individual computers. That's why the MPAA is keen to get ISPs on board in order to catch offenders. While video files can take a long time to download, the MPAA hopes that by stamping out the problem before broadband technologies take off, they will avoid the problems the music industry experienced with Napster.

Retail giants work to cut down porn on the Net

Computer retailers are joining in the fight against Internet porn and paedophilia. PC World, Tiny and Time have joined forces with the police and Microsoft to reduce the chances of children encountering things they shouldn't while surfing the Net. The move is unprecedented and significant; the retailers involved acknowledge they have a responsibility when selling PCs to families.



Under-17s: at risk from the Web

PICTURE: NEWSMAKERS

The move will mean that all new PCs sold through the retailers will be fitted with filter software to drastically reduce the level of porn accessible. The retailers will also recommend 'child-friendly' chat rooms. The measures were revealed at the launch of a Government's task force on child protection.

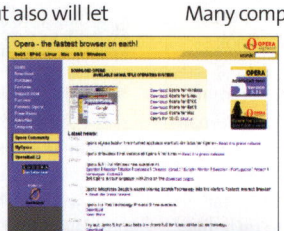
The Dixons Group, which also owns PC World as well as Curry's, has started to plan guidelines for customers who purchase its machines. The company is working in association with the Internet Watch Foundation (***www.iwf.org.uk***).

Research from NetValue (***uk.netvalue.com***) found one in five under-17s use porn sites and they could stay at one site for up to half an hour. There are now one and a half million under-17 Net users in the UK.

Web Screen: lets you surf anywhere in the house – or even the garden

Surf from the garden shed

Sitting in the garden while surfing the Web isn't such a distant possibility after all. Swedish mobile phone pioneer Ericsson (***www.ericsson.co.uk***) has come up with the portable Web Screen, which not only acts as a cordless telephone, but also will let you surf the Net and communicate via email, too. The unit operates within a household on the new standard for wireless communication, Bluetooth.



Opera: behind the wireless Web

For your money you'll get the main device – strangely reminiscent of an Etch-a-Sketch toy – plus an 'access unit' which connects to the power and phone line. The Web Screen will operate for an hour and a half between charges, enough time to read the morning's emails on the patio – the company claim the product will be able to operate to a range of 100 metres and should be available later this year.

The Screen's Internet browser is based on Opera (***www.opera.com***), while the screen comes with a stylus, so navigating will be a doddle. You'll get 32MB of RAM, plus an address book and message centre.

Many companies are planning to launch similar devices, although they're being cagey about the timing. Palm is is looking to design new Bluetooth-enabled cases for existing devices.

For now, it's likely the wireless technology will become available via adapters connected to Bluetooth-enabled mobile phone handsets; Nokia (***www.nokia.com/bluetooth***) has launched a connection pack for the 6210 mobile.

Sony demonstrated a Bluetooth memory stick earlier this year, but owing to the 10-metre range of existing Bluetooth products, it isn't enough to roam an entire house.

Stressed by the Web?

the net helpline is available for all software, hardware, ISP and technical enquiries. Lines are open on Thursdays from 2pm to 5pm.

0208 267 5933

or email thenetnow@haynet.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

FIRST BYTES>>

> WE ARE NOT E-MUSED

Email has failed to get the royal stamp of approval. Government whip Graham Allen has the job of keeping the Crown informed of the goings-on in Parliament via a daily briefing to the Queen. In times past this was in the form of a letter delivered to Buck House by horse. New Labour had streamlined the operation by replacing the horse with a bike, but when Allen suggested the message be sent via email rather than letter he was given a rebuke. It's not clear whether the suggestion actually reached the throne or not, although Her Maj has suffered along with everyone else in the dot com 'realignment': her £100,000 investment in aerial photographers Getmapping.com is now worth less than £70,000...

> CRAP-HAPPY

Describing a company's wares as 'crappy' is usually one of the best ways to end up in court. However, we can say with confidences that Canadian Tire products are – because they're trying to wrest control of the domain name ***www.crappytire.com*** from its current owner. The amazing case was presented to the World Intellectual Property Organisation by Canadian Tire, who are well aware that their tyres are known by the 'crappy' soubriquet. However, the company claims it's meant in a loveable way and demanded that the URL be handed over because it infringes trademark rights. The owner, a Mick McFadden, begs to differ. He turned down initial offers of $3,000 and $5,000 from Canadian Tire on the grounds that he didn't like their attitude. When Canadian Tire threatened to sue, McFadden took the site down but vowed he wouldn't sell it to the company for less than $1million – then put it up for sale on the open market for $85,000. Only in (North) America...

Dotmusic: reports of Reed's demise were premature...

> REED YOUR OWN OBITUARY

Hoary old rocker Lou Reed was forced to release a statement saying he's alive and well after a story swept the Internet that he had died. The rumour, purporting to be from respected news agency Reuters but described by Dotmusic (*www.dotmusic.com*) as 'a glut of misinformation', claimed that the 58-year old former heroin addict had died of a demerol overdose in his apartment in New York's Chelsea Hotel. In fact, the former Velvet Underground frontman was in Amsterdam preparing for his latest project.

> EMAIL FROM ABOVE

If you had an email in your inbox from jesus-christ.co.uk, you'd be tempted to read it. Perhaps that's why popular email anointers Another.com (***www.another.com***) have announced that jesus-christ.co.uk is by far its most popular domain name. Of the five million email addresses that Another has provided so far, more than twice as many refer to Jesus than to the second most popular 'celebrities'... Westlife.

Another: full to the brim with would-be Messiahs

No way in for desperate users

Webmail blamed for virus chaos

Businesses block access as Homepage hits surfers

Webmail services took a hammering as another major email virus hit the inboxes of millions of computer users this month. Called Homepage, the virus was similar in build to February's Anna Kournikova outbreak and was probably created by the same software. The attack also came almost exactly a year after the 'Love Bug' virus, which caused widespread damage to businesses.

Many companies who fitted virus shields to their corporate firewalls after previous attacks are blaming Webmail for allowing the viruses onto their systems and have blocked access to the major providers, such as Hotmail and Yahoo!, to increase security.

Email users were left helpless as Homepage spread quickly through Asia and Europe from the far East and Australia, where the virus was first detected in Canberra at Parliament House. Victims opened the email, which pretended to be from a friend. The main body of the message read 'Hi! You've got to see this page! It's really cool ;O)'. The attachment was disguised as an HTML file and was called 'homepage.html.vbs.' The email redirected the user's browser to one of four porn sites. Many experts have wondered whether the virus was simply an attempt to drum up traffic for the sites, as the virus also reconfigured the victim's Internet settings so the porn site automatically became their home page.

At the same time, all the addresses in the victim's address book were also sent the virus, called a worm because it reproduces the more it moves. Only Microsoft Outlook users were affected. No lasting damage was done, although many big organisations found their email systems overloaded.

Chief suspect was South American code writer 'K. Alomar' who was also thought to be behind the Kournikova virus. Homepage was encrypted so that it couldn't be recognised as being built by Alomar. Experts are advising any users who find the virus in their inboxes to delete it immediately and warn contacts of its existence.

Phoney auctions lead to sentences

Two men in the US have pleaded guilty to fraud charges after rigging auctions on eBay (***www.ebay.com***) by bidding under pseudonyms for paintings they sold themselves.

Kenneth Walton and Scott Beach faced five years in prison for each of 11 charges of wire and mail fraud, but a plea-bargain at the federal court in Sacramento saw them pay back $100,000 and promise not to take part in online auctions for three years. Walton has also been disbarred as an attorney. The pair will be sentenced on 26 June.

The case is believed to be the first indictment for such illegal goings-on.

eBay: vigilant on online fraud

The feds are still chasing a third suspect, Kenneth Fetterman, who's now on the lam from the law.

The scam swindled art buyers out of $450,000 when Walton, Beach and (allegedly) Fetterman placed 'shills', bids on their own products, to boost prices in around 500 auctions between 1998 and 2000. The hard work was rendered pointless when the crims got greedy: they bumped the price of a fake painting up to $135,000 after listing it at 25 cents.

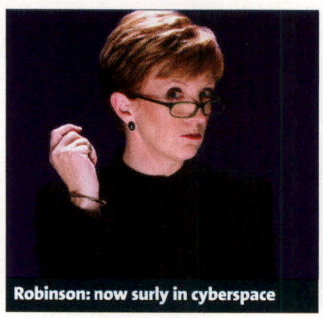
You are the weakest Web link

The great quiz show battle has moved from the telly to the Net with the news that BBC hit *The Weakest Link* is going online against rival *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*

The Anne Robinson-fronted programme now has its own site at ***www.bbc.co.uk/weakestlink***, offering a behind-the-scenes look at the show, a downloadable mask of its presenter to scare the kids and RealPlayer clips of the most indignant exits by defeated contestants.

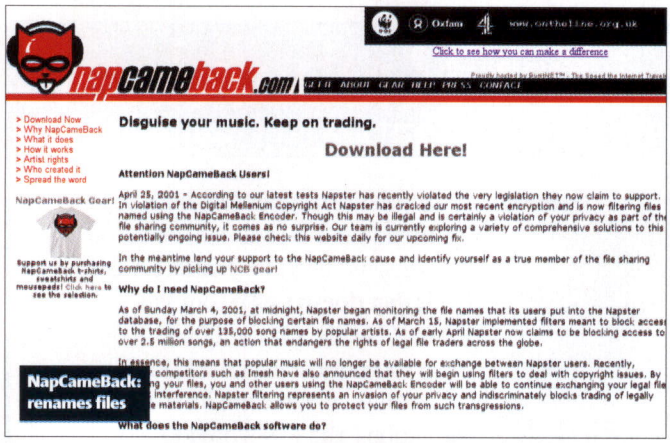
The Weakest Link already has its own US presence at ***www.nbc.com*** – crucially, however, neither site boasts an online version of the game. ITV's Web Millionaire game at ***www.itv.co.uk/millionaire*** has quickly become one of the most popular lunchtime time-wasters going.

It's been an exciting month for Web and TV crossovers – Britain's biggest show, *Coronation Street*, is to features its first Internet-related storyline this month, although its contents won't delight technophiles. Fifteen-year old Sarah-Louise Platt will become infatuated with a fellow 'teenager' she meets in a chat room and arranges to meet up with in real life. The fellow chatter, however, will turn out to be a man in his 30s preying on chat users.


Robinson: now surly in cyberspace

In perhaps the most worrying Web TV development, former *Swap Shop* presenter Keith Chegwin has announced the launch of his own online station, broadcasting from his own house. *Cheggers Bedroom* (***www.cheggersbedroom.com***) is on air 12 hours a day with shows like *Cheggs And Bacon* and *Wake Up With Cheggers*: the menu also includes financial news and celebrity gossip, all presented by the former alcoholic. The site reportedly has a fanatical US following.

PICTURES: PA; IMAGEBANK; BBC PIC PUB


napcameback.com
Click to see how you can make a difference
Disguise your music. Keep on trading.
Download Here!
Attention NapCameBack Users!
Why do I need NapCameBack?
NapCameBack: renames files

Napster fury as students' site renames its files

Napster is having the tables turned by a group of Canadian students – the revolutionary file sharing service is threatening legal action against a system which infiltrates its own software.

NapCameBack (***www.napcameback.com***) gets round copyright restrictions by renaming files in cod-Latin, thus making their identity undetectable to those without the software.

After a court judgement in March, Napster has been obliged to remove any file named by a record company as copyrighted material – over 135,000 different tracks have so far been blocked. NapCameBack, however, renames the songs: while Napster can simply download the software themselves and find the hidden songs, they have to do this for every single track rather than running an automated program.

Napster isn't amused: a strongly-worded legal letter demanding NapCameBack remove the software has failed, and further proceedings may follow. One Napster clone, Aimster, has closed after similar threats, but NapCameBack claims that since the software renames the files rather than hiding them, Napster cannot legally remove the songs. 'It's like a big monkey trying to scare a small monkey by banging a pot on the ground,' says NapCameBack CEO James Chilcott.

Meanwhile, US student Matt Goyer plans to move Napster's user base to the principality of Sealand (***www.sealandgov.com***) where it would, in theory at least, be beyond the reach of the law.

Goyer is the brains behind FairTunes (***www.fairtunes.com***), a site where music fans can voluntarily pay their favourite artists for breaching their copyright. So far, Metallica have earned four dollars.

Dirty deeds done online

This year's General Election campaign saw the major parties' traditional dirty tricks campaigns move into cyberspace. Main offenders were the Welsh Liberal Democrats who craftily registered ***www.plaid-cymru.co.uk***. While the site in question made it clear there are no connections with the real Plaid Cymru (***www.plaidcymru.org***), the Welsh nationalists were less than impressed. The Liberal Democrats hit back, with their culture minister Jenny Randerson claiming 'a modern response from a very modern party'.

Elsewhere, the domain ***www.newlabour.co.uk*** was found to redirect to ***www.conservatives.com***, provoking a less-than-favourable reaction from the Labour Party. Best of all was ***www.williamhague.com***, which, far from being the official site of the Conservative leader, is in fact the home of a naturist from Surrey.

'There is no better way to enjoy the outside than with your clothes off!' proclaims the other Hague. Imagine that on the hustings...

KNOWHOW THE INSTANT EXPERT GUIDE

No.24: Voice Portals

Sounds pretty dodgy. Is it a 'big brother' version of MSN where Bill Gates speaks to me when I log on?

Er, not quite. A voice portal is basically the same as an online portal such as Yahoo! (***www.yahoo.co.uk***) or MSN (***www.msn.co.uk***), but instead of looking at it on your browser, you ring a number on your telephone instead and listen to the information.

Eckoh: soon to hit these shores

Sounds a bit complicated. What can it do for me?

Well it's not really that complicated. You dial a phone number and can take advantage of a number of services you'd find on a normal Web-based portal. You'll be able to hear your emails read out to you, as well as being able to compose new ones and listen to other content from the site.

Won't I have to listen to lots of information I don't want?

No, the service is fully customisable. You can determine what information you'll hear from the Web, so you can find out the latest details for your favourite football team or even news from a chosen subject area – though there may well be ads, too.

Is this one of those American Net fads we'll never experience here?

Not at all. It's true that the US have been doing it for a while but the 365 Corporation is shortly to launch its strangely-named portal Eckoh (***www.eckoh.com***) in the UK. Access will be through a single national-rate number.

What else will the portal offer?

You'll be able to use your Microsoft Outlook contacts to send your emails plus there's an appointments calendar which will also synchronise with Outlook. It's also planned that the service will inform you of appointments via SMS and voice alerts. Also in the pipeline are call forwarding services plus shopping from partners such as HMV and Domino's Pizza.

So you reckon this is this the next big thing, then?

Several companies have launched voice portals Stateside, the most famous of which are Yahoo! and AOL. Lycos is expected to launch one by the end of the year, but you can be sure that if it's a success, we'll see more on this side of the pond, too.

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News
"[on WAP vs OmniSky] Put the two side by side and there is no contest."
- The Guardian, February 2001
Partners
OmniSky gives you access to great international, national and local content from world class partners such as:
sports.com
Get OmniSky
Wireless Service on your Handspring Visor now
COMING SOON!
Palm V
A sleek add-on modem that lets you connect wirelessly to Omnisky from anywhere in the UK and Europe.
OmniSky's home page: the place to find out more about the future Web

On Test The next Net?

OMNISKY
MRRP £199
(three-month trial of beta release)
★★★★☆

PROS Well-chosen sites in OmniSky channel; mail service
CONS Still too buggy; dial-up

It's hard to know where you stand with the wireless Web at the moment. It seems true 3G communications are being delayed until the end of the year, while GPRS will arrive in the autmn. However, there is a way to enjoy always-on Internet on the go – and we've got our hands on one for an exclusive test.

OmniSky is a service that brings to Palm and Pocket PC-powered personal organisers live Internet connections and email on demand.

As we went to press, OmniSky was still touting its 'beta' package – three months with a Handspring Visor Platinum or colour Prism PDA, VisorPhone springboard attachment, software and connection through BT Cellnet for £199. Once you've paid your money, every connection you make is free. The company has yet to announce pricing once the Beta period's over.

Does the service work? After a fortnight with the Handspring/OmniSky combination, we can say yes – although there are still bugs to iron out. For starters, the Visor Prism/VisorPhone combination is bulky enough to stretch even the biggest pockets – the smaller Palm combo should be in stores by now.

Other problems stem from being reliant on a telephone provider for your coverage, which can result in patchy service, and a software glitch which resulted in our having to reboot several times.

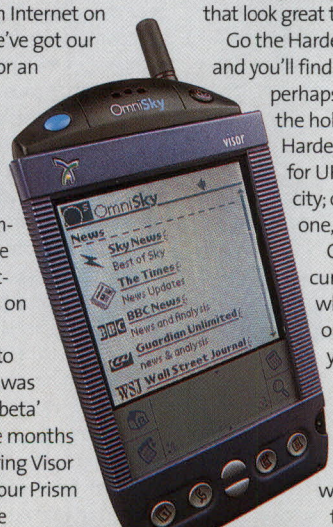
As for speed, OmniSky uses Web clippings to provide you with a view of pages – luckily, the home page has brought together a host of sites that look great through clippings.

Go the Harden's Dining Guide, and you'll find a feature that is perhaps OmniSky's ace in the hole – OneTap. Harden's lets you search for UK restaurants by city; once you've found one, save the address.

OmniSky's email is currently POP3 only, which means that once you've set up, you can access Yahoo! or Freeserve mail in moments.

The service is GPRS-compatible when it goes live, and therein lies the rub. If you're a business that really needs to access the Internet on the road, OmniSky is the answer – though we'd suggest the Palm in place of the VisorPhone. But if you can wait a while, the GPRS-enabled OmniSky through a Palm could be the dream solution. If, and only if, the non-Beta service is bug-free.

www.omnisky.co.uk



The OmniSky handset: bulky, but hiding a range of useful features

Tim Richardson

OPINION THE BROADBAND MYTH

If you want super-fast, high-speed broadband Net access, pack your bags and head for South Korea. If that doesn't take your fancy, try Canada. Or the US. But on no account stay in the UK. That's because, when compared to other nations, the UK's broadband credentials just don't stack up. And when it comes to league tables, the UK is to broadband what sponge is to a trifle – near the bottom.

The latest figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development found the UK is languishing in 21st place (out of 30) in a league table of broadband-enabled countries. It revealed that South Korea boasted 10 broadband connection per 100 people. Canada sauntered into second place with 3.9, with the US on 2.25.

The UK is to broadband what sponge is to a trifle

And then there's the UK with just 0.08 lines per 100. To put it another way, for every 10,000 people in South Korea there are 1,000 broadband connections. In the UK there are eight.

Make no mistake, this is a pitiful situation that has caused acute embarrassment for a Government whose stated policy is to be a leading broadband nation.

BT now claims half of all homes in the UK can hook up to its ADSL service. If you live in the right area then you've also got the option of cable modem services from the likes of NTL or Telewest. Which is good, right? Of course. Unfortunately, there's another snag. Despite all the work and investment going on, it seems people just aren't interested in high-speed Net access.

Recent research showed that the lack of competition among operators and the high price of broadband were responsible for damping down demand. More worryingly still, researchers concluded consumers were simply unaware of the benefits.

That's not as mad as it sounds. NTL recently published research which found 69 per cent of those questioned had never even heard of broadband. Of those that had, a third thought it had something to do with radio.

Perhaps that's why NTL has decided that it needs to spend £5 million advertising the benefits of broadband. And other operators will no doubt also follow suit. But it's all very well chucking money at the problem in a bid to raise awareness. Thing is, is it enough?

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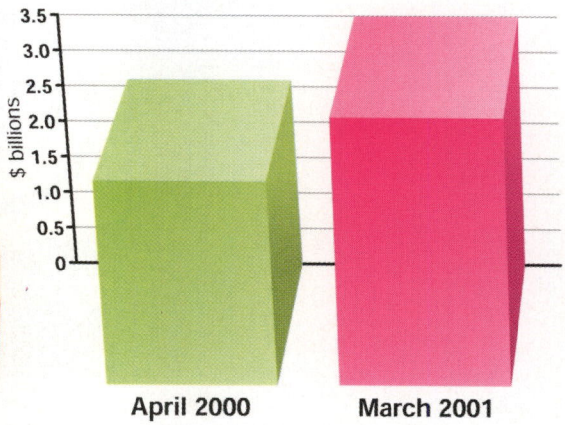
Statattack»

:// The Web in charts and graphs

No sign of a Web recession as spending soars

The talk of impending economic doom hasn't dented the buoyancy of online retail, it seems. A survey of 39,000 Americans found that 48.2 percent of the US population, a whopping 100.2 million people, had made an online purchase in the past year, with 81.2 percent of all Web users now having splashed the cash in cyberspace. That's great news in the current economic climate, and keeps e-commerce on course for the wild predictions being made for the next few years. In total, $3.5 billion was spent on the Web this march, up 35 percent from $2.6 billion in April last year. Two retailers – books and music supremo Amazon and auction house eBay – lead the way, sharing almost 30 percent of online buyers between them. In total, almost 40 million users visited the two in March, leaving the competition trailing – although other notable names at the top include record company BMG, bookseller Barnes & Noble, music retailer CDNow and holiday giants Travelocity. As the small fry are picked off, the big, it seems, just keep getting bigger...

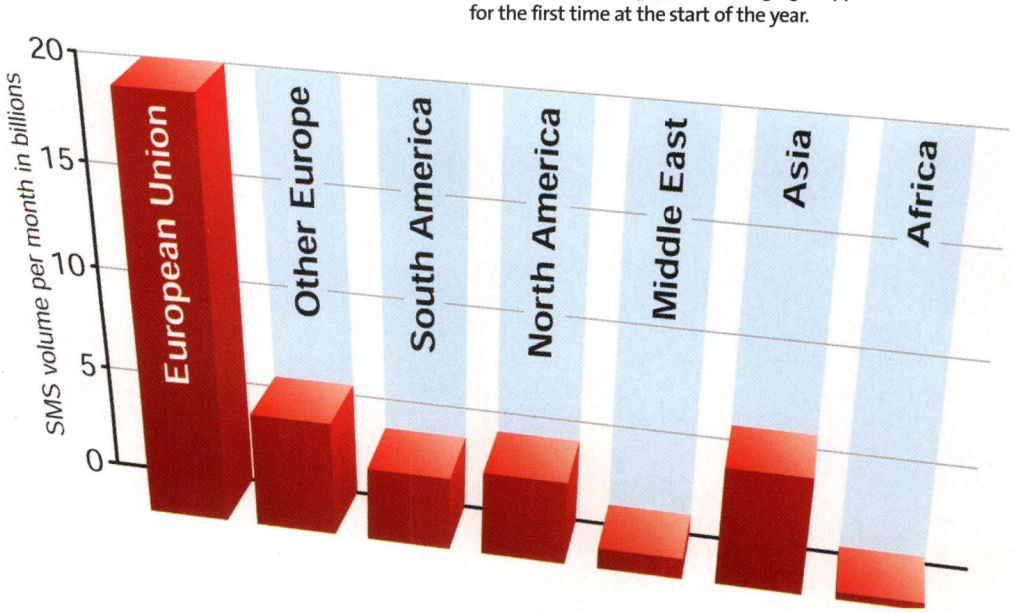


GROWTH IN E-COMMERCE FROM APRIL 2000 TO MARCH 2001

Why the world's going text messaging mad

For a medium its creators thought would have only very limited appeal, SMS messaging has certainly been a hit. Take any form of public transport nowadays and you'll be dodging texters furiously tapping at their keypads. Even Bridget Jones is a fan, according to her creator.

The latest figures from the GSM Association suggest that, by the end of this year, a staggering 40 billion text messages will be sent worldwide every month. By the end of next year, experts claim that figure will have risen to over 60 billion. What makes these figures interesting, however, is the geograpical spread – while there are more mobiles per person in the US than anywhere else on earth, SMS has failed to take off at all, with only a fifth of the number of messages sent in the EU. In fact, it's the British and, in particular, the Scandanavians who have taken to the craze, with the Far East not far behind. Not everything in the garden is rosy, though – UK messaging dropped for the first time at the start of the year.



ILLUSTRATIONS: PETER LIDDIARD

QUICK FIGURES

YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE IT...»

- Using the Web has now become a more popular way of finding a new home than visiting an estate agent, according to a Yell.com survey. Over 80 percent of respondents used the Net as a househunting tool, compared to 73 percent visiting estate agents and 72 percent browsing the newspapers.
- **One in 12 people on the planet now own a GSM phone, a total of half a billion handsets – China alone has 82 million users.**
- The wired revolution has hit the forecourts hard, says a US poll, with more than half of all car buyers trawling the Web to gauge prices and haggle before they enter a showroom.
- **Net monitoring agency NetValue claims one in five child Web users visits pornographic sites, staying for an average of 28 minutes. The UK has more under-11s online than any other European country bar Norway – 1.2 million in total.**

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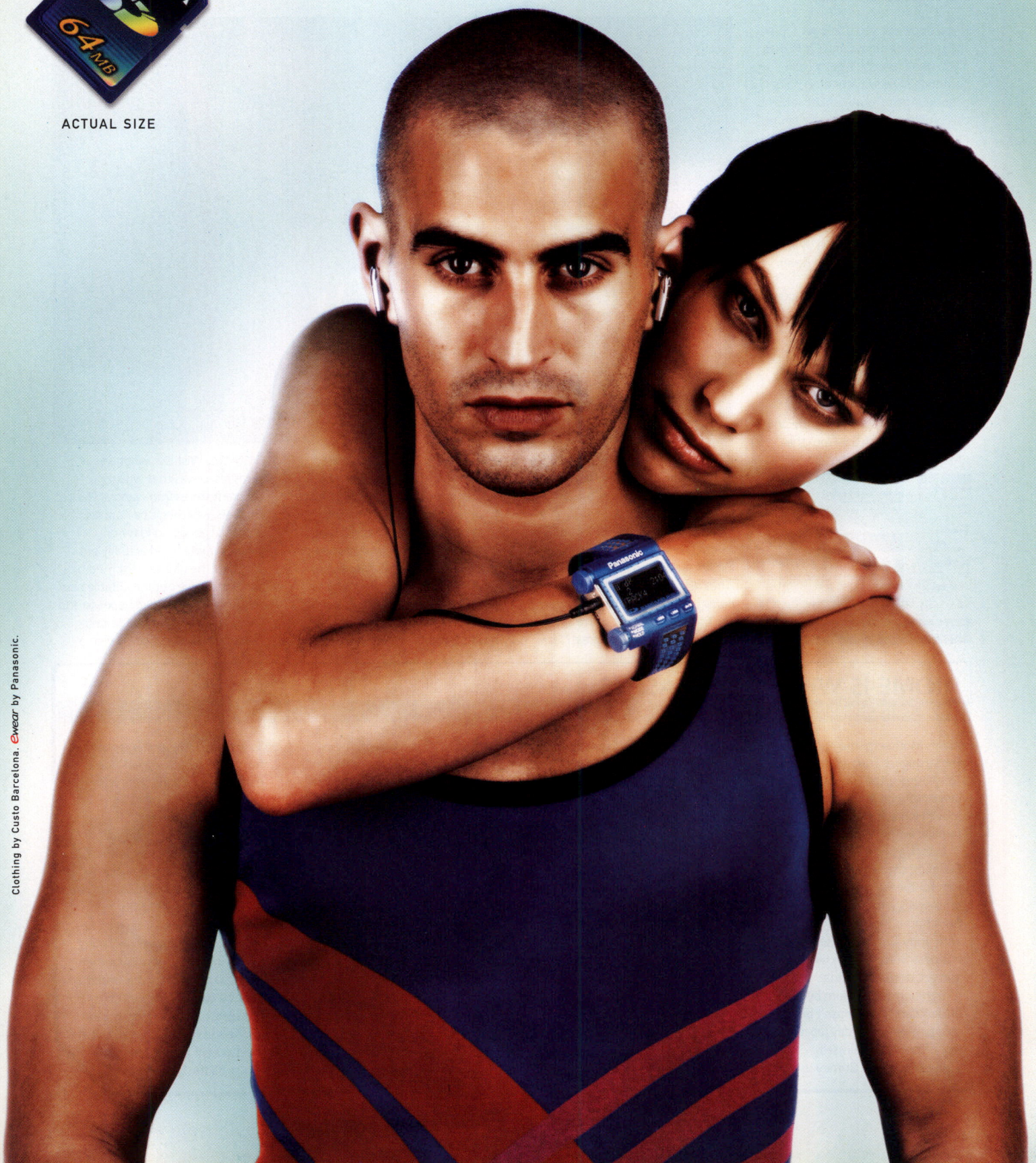


Clothing by Custo Barcelona. *e.wear* by Panasonic.

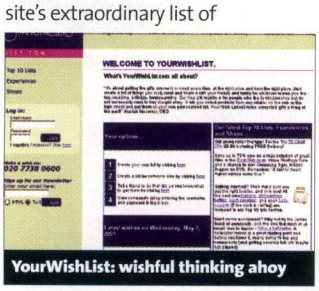
When you wish upon a mouse

www.yourwishlist.com

If you don't ask, you don't get. Or, in the case of birthdays and Christmas, if you don't ask, you'll get a Noel Edmonds-style sweater or 10 pairs of socks. Again. YourWishList solves this problem. Browse the site's huge range of online stores, consult the reviews of the top 10 scooters, cookery books, computer mice – you name it – then create your own personal wish list which the site emails or faxes to your friends and family so they can see exactly what you want, buy it online and never waste their money again.

'The whole idea is effectively to make a shopping list,' explains co-founder Sean Kyne. 'But it's beyond that, because it could be your birthday list, wedding list, or experiences you want.'

YourWishList recognises that material possessions aren't the only things people wish for. From the site's extraordinary list of experiences you could learn to drive a racing car, spend a day at the Chelsea Flower Show or, amazingly, meet the Dalai Lama.



YourWishList: wishful thinking ahoy

Macewan (left) and Kyne strike a blow

'I think there's an element of fun involved when people send that kind of request to friends,' says Kyne. 'They're like, "What the hell are you doing? I can't afford to send you to the Dalai Lama!" And you're saying, "OK, but wouldn't it be great?"'

Forthcoming lifestyle-orientated treats like an ironing service, a dog-walker or a decorator should prove to be less taxing on the wallet.

Kyne, whose background is in marketing and planning, came upon the idea with Alastair Macewan, who set up the first UK online wedding list, present.co.uk. 'We both saw that nobody was offering a multiple merchant list,' recalls Kyne.

'With YourWishList, what we recognised was that with 77 different stores from various vertical markets, whether it be hobbies, electrical goods, holidays, or whatever, you could actually put together the ultimate list.' And by keeping an eye out for suitable new requests, YourWishList hopes to add more options – and therefore to make more dreams come true.

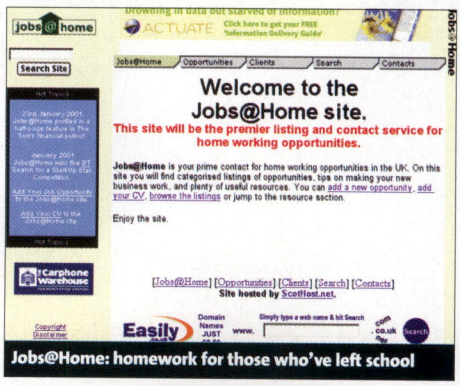
:HOME IS WHERE THE CASH IS...

www.jobsathome.co.uk

Alanis Morissette may not have the strongest grasp of irony, but Tony Gurney, the founder and owner of recruitment sites Jobs@Home, is more than familiar with the concept.

In fact, 35-year old Gurney's fledgling site, which aims to find jobs for the legion of potential employees who'd rather work from home, is positively awash with irony. Gurney started the business from his own bedroom and yet, despite national recognition and acclaim by the bucketload, he still hasn't been able to give up the day job and work from home himself.

Ayrshire-based Gurney used his skills as a freelance IT consultant to start up the site last year, when he began looking for a way to cut down on his 12-hour days and spend more time with his family.



Jobs@Home: homework for those who've left school

Frustrated by the lack of information on homeworking online, he built a database of like-minded individuals with skills and time to offer employers. Today, Jobs@Home caters for everyone from telesales representatives to computer experts, yet Gurney admits he has a long way to go before he can enter semi-retirement:

'We have hundreds of registered clients, but we need to get the employers in,' he explains.

'Every type of person is registered, from IT people to stay-at-home part-timers and mothers with children. Hopefully we can address all their needs.'

The real turning point for Gurney, however, came with a BT-sponsored award in January which netted the site £10,000 in a Search For A Start-Up Star competition. It was the spark he needed. 'At first I was only taking it semi-seriously,' admits Gurney, 'but that gives you a real impetus. I want it to make money now – if someone offers me £100 million for the site that'd be great, but at the moment you just have to aim to be the best you can.'

WORDS: ALEX NEWBY (WISH); ROBERT JEFFERY (JOBS) ; PICTURE: RICHARD LAWRENCE

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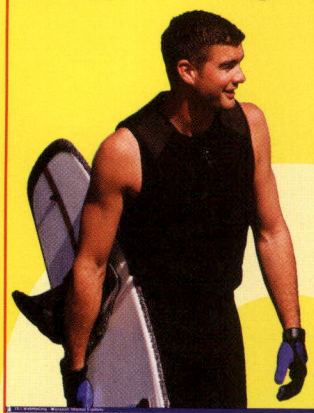

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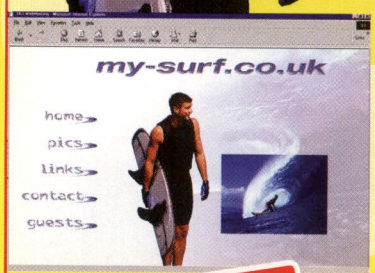

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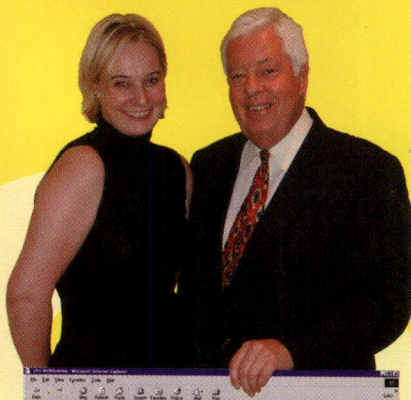

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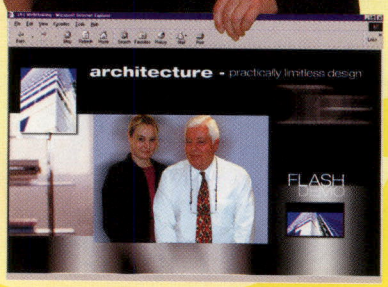

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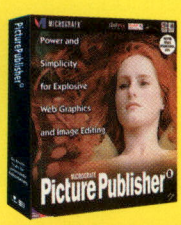

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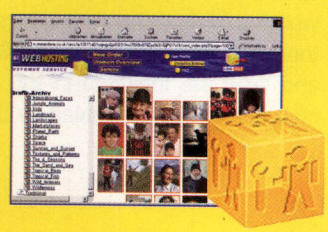

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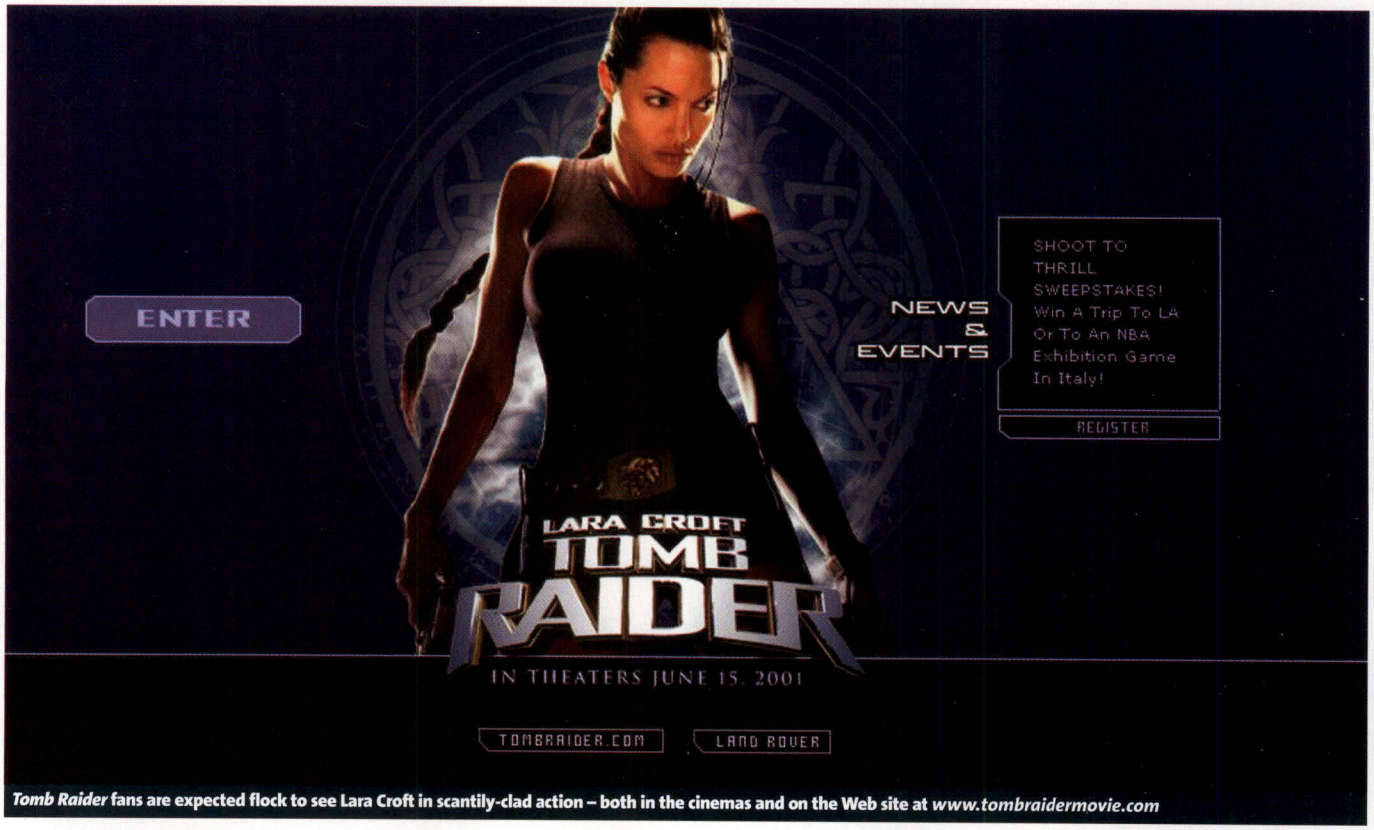
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LAND ROVER

Tomb Raider* fans are expected flock to see Lara Croft in scantily-clad action – both in the cinemas and on the Web site at *www.tombraidermovie.com

Generally, each year is defined by one vivid movie image. Remember the *Batman* emblem in 1989 or the T-Rex in 1993? This year, the smart money is on a gorgeous, large-breasted brunette armed with a pair of massive guns. *Tomb Raider* hits multiplexes in early July, moving from pixellated goddess to the lus-cious Angelina Jolie. Forget Renee Zellweger as Bridget Jones, this is a real transformation.

The official *Tomb Raider* site (***www.tombraidermovie.com***) is a formidably slick affair, strongly capitalising on Lara's video game roots. Though most speeds can apply, your PC will have to flex some serious muscle to meet the site's demands for Flash and IPIX animation, but it's utterly worth it. Downloadable goodies mingle with top-flight behind-the-scenes info and sprinkled with no small amount of provocative shots of Lara, all contained in a swish high-tech 'viewing-room' navigation system. One of the best promo sites around, and enough to keep the fans happy.

ARTY INTELLIGENCE

Recently, the heady anticipation that surrounded the enigmatic Spielberg/Kubrick collaboration *A.I.* (***aimovie.warnerbros.com***) was in danger of being diluted by

MUSIC

Enjoy a field trip

It was touch and go for a while. Such was the relentless march of foot and mouth that the entire festival programme seemed destined to be stamped under a soft protective mat, soaked liberally in disinfectant. And though days spent under a foot of mud while living off overpriced barely-cooked foodstuffs may not be the thing of everybody's dreams, a summer without festivals would have been like soup without a spoon. As you read this several will have already happened, most notably the metal noise-in that is Ozzfest, though it's worth checking out ***www.ozzfest.com*** to see the face paint favoured by the under-14s.

The one-day event, tailored to a fairly niche market, is a constant of the summer. Following Ozzfest's lead, noted hotbed of rock Milton Keynes hosts AC/DC and 'special guests' Megadeth, Queens of the Stone Age, and The Offspring on 8 June. No official site, sadly. Nipping at its heels, at the same arena, is a Limp Bizkit show – with Deftones, OutKast and Godsmack floating on their tails. Again there's no official site, but ***www.limpbizkit.com*** is always worth a visit: frontman Fred Durst frequently stops by for a chat.

Homelands and the Fleadh on one site

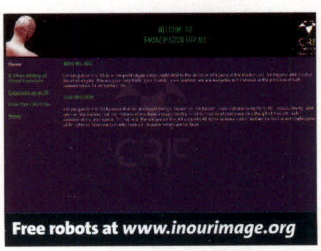
That little bit of Irish in everyone is catered for by the annual London Fleadh in Finsbury Park on 16 June. See ***www.meanfiddler.com/fleadh*** to find out just what the acts, ranging from Trusty Rock Standards like Neil Young, Evan Dando and Billy Bragg to Bright New Hopes like Starsailor, are doing for anglo-Irish relations.

There's another event on the same day, but there's little chance of a clash of clientele. Those who dislike either London or hoary old rockers might plump for Gatecrasher's Summer Sound

Salla: Sentient Machine Therapist?

Spielberg's dreaded penchant for sentiment. Net audiences breathed a sigh of dismay as the trailer, replete with twee acoustic guitar, showcased a pair of wide, bushy-lashed child eyes with the legend 'His love is real. But he is not'.

However, disappointment was soon displaced by genuine intrigue as Net investigation exposed the tip of what looks like a terrifically complex ad campaign. The trailer cited one Jeanine Salla as a 'Sentient Machine Therapist' and her site (***www.jeaninesalla.com***), discovered through an enterprising Google search, details extensive A.I. research – two centuries from now. With links to sites like The Coalition for Robot Freedom (***www.inourimage.org***), this year's most potent online mystery had arrived. While the official site gives competent coverage of the film, the Net-bound search suggests that Kubrick may be helming a masterpiece from the grave...



Free robots at www.inourimage.org

The Matrix: Coming to an Xbox near you

GAMES

'We need guns. Lots of guns'

Microsoft fired the first real warning shot across the bows of PlayStation2 last month, and the battleground is on the Web. In an act of sheer audacity, the Xbox snatched online exclusivity on the hottest game licence in the world away from Sony by signing *The Matrix* from Interplay to a six month Xbox-only contract. Microsoft lent the company $5 million to complete the game, and the Xbox version will be the only one to feature online play. Coupled with that is the fact that if you want to step into Keanu's shoes at all next year, you'll need to shell out for an Xbox. Hear that? That's the sound of Bill Gates laughing.

...AND THERE'S MORE TO COME

The *Matrix* sequel is scheduled to release next summer simultaneously with the game, and only the thickest entertainment watcher would fail to realise the enormity of Microsoft's machinations. New details on the game have also been released. Online play isn't the only thing Xbox's *Matrix* title will have all to itself – how about: voice-overs provided by the actual actors from the film; a soundtrack featuring an exclusive score from the film's composer; more moves, vehicles and weapons; more detailed motion capture on characters; and more hidden movie footage? That, dear reader, means Microsoft has effectively got the only decent version of the game of the movie likely to bring Hollywood to its knees next year. Sony hasn't. It's war.

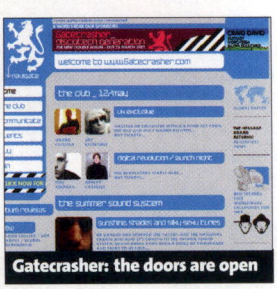
Game developer Interplay is also throwing the rest of its triple-As at Xbox, including bizarre real-time strategy title *Giants*, magic- and creature-based multiplayer game *Sacrifice* (created by *Matrix* developer Shiny) and *Galleon*, the game being worked on by Lara Croft inventor Toby Gard. Online play will definitely feature in *Giants* and *Sacrifice*, and suddenly the sneering Xbox cynics that saw PS2 as an impenetrable fortress are back-tracking faster than a gazelle faced with a lioness.

BOL REVEALS ONLINE RETAIL FUTURE

BOL.com has become the first independent retailer to admit plans to digitally distribute games. Although it is well known that Sony is to make its entire PlayStation catalogue online for download via PS2, the BOL move is the first to truly rattle the High Street. PC games will be first later this summer, but as Xbox and PS2 hover into view with their hard drives, you can expect the likes of HMV and Virgin to keep games on discs and off servers. The winner will be the consumer, but try telling that to the likes of Richard Branson...

BOL: roll up, roll up,get games here

System at Turweston Aerodrome in Northants, with 18 hours of DJs, MCs and live acts (Craig David, the ubiquitous OutKast, Chemical Brothers, Sasha and Paul Oakenfold). See ***www.gatecrasher.com*** to realise it will be, without a doubt, banging.



Gatecrasher: the doors are open

One festival that *has* suffered the ignominy of a move is Essential 2001: foot and mouth shifted it from its longstanding Brighton home to Hackney Marshes in east London. Despite the unappetising new home, the line-up has not suffered. Over 14-15 July you can see (deep breath) Public Enemy, Isaac Hayes, George Clinton, Guru's Jazmatazz, Lo Fi Allstars, Ice T, Goldie, Mark B & Blade, Red Snapper, Sizzla, Squarepusher, Plaid, Gilles Peterson and others. James Brown played there last year and insisted on driving around the place in a white stretch limo. It's that sort of event and demands your full attention – so visit ***www.essentialfestival.com***.

Indie kids will be out in force at Scotland's T In The Park (7-8 July, ***www.tinthepark.com***) for Coldplay, Catatonia, Stereophonics and Texas; they'll be out again for V2001 (***www.vfestival.com***) on 16 and 17 August, which has Red Hot Chili Peppers, Texas, Foo Fighters, Placebo, Shed Seven and Toploader over two sites in Chelmsford, Essex and Weston Park in Staffordshire.

However, the daddy of them all is Reading. These days it stretches across two sites in Reading and Leeds over August Bank Holiday weekend (Friday 24 to Sunday 26), and it has Eminem, who will look like a big fantastic scary cartoon bounding across a setting sun. Reading also has Marilyn Manson putting on a BIG SHOW, PJ Harvey slinking and seducing, and Travis who have just written an album of shimmering quality. The line-up's not yet finalised, but keep an eye on ***www.readingfestival.com***.

V2001: Virgin festivalgoers welcome

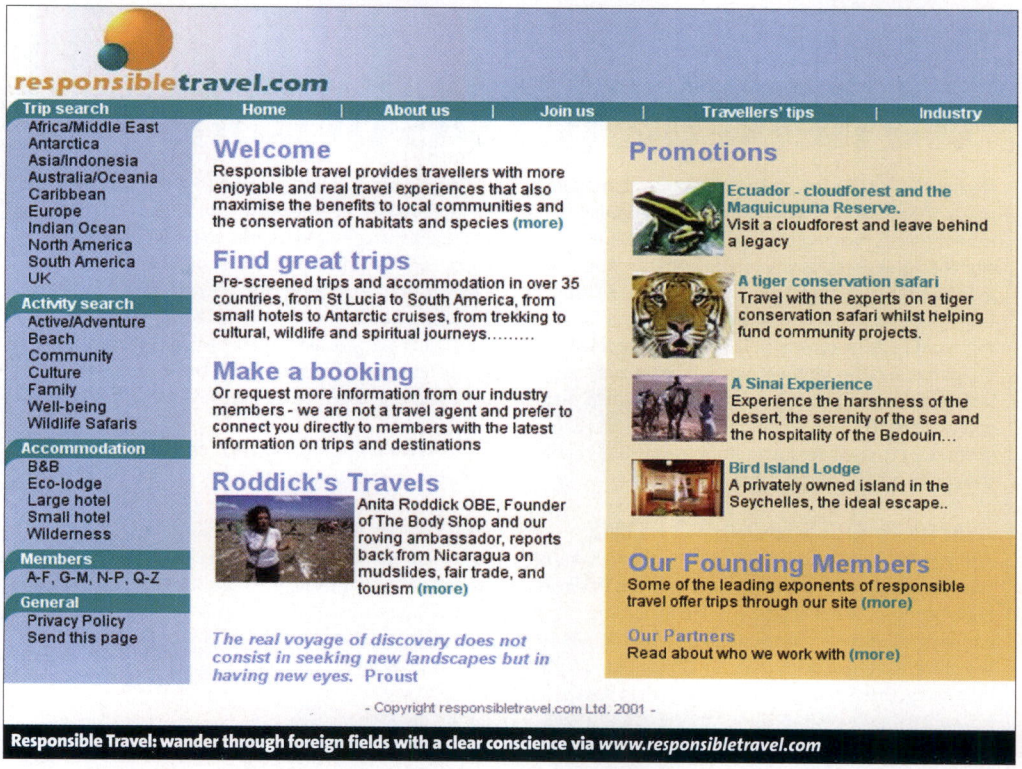
WORDS: DANNY GRAYDON (MOVIES), DECLAN ALBISTON (MUSIC), PATRICK GARRATT (GAMES); PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

what'snew»

The best new sites we've found – plus your picks

:// NEW SITES

How your holidays can help others


responsibletravel.com
Trip search
Africa/Middle East
Antarctica
Asia/Indonesia
Australia/Oceania
Caribbean
Europe
Indian Ocean
North America
South America
UK
Activity search
Active/Adventure
Beach
Community
Culture
Family
Well-being
Wildlife Safaris
Accommodation
B&B
Eco-lodge
Large hotel
Small hotel
Wilderness
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Welcome
Responsible travel provides travellers with more enjoyable and real travel experiences that also maximise the benefits to local communities and the conservation of habitats and species (more)
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Or request more information from our industry members - we are not a travel agent and prefer to connect you directly to members with the latest information on trips and destinations
Roddick's Travels
Anita Roddick OBE, Founder of The Body Shop and our roving ambassador, reports back from Nicaragua on mudslides, fair trade, and tourism (more)
The real voyage of discovery does not consist in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes. Proust
Promotions
Ecuador - cloudforest and the Maquicupuna Reserve.
Visit a cloudforest and leave behind a legacy
A tiger conservation safari
Travel with the experts on a tiger conservation safari whilst helping fund community projects.
A Sinai Experience
Experience the harshness of the desert, the serenity of the sea and the hospitality of the Bedouin...
Bird Island Lodge
A privately owned island in the Seychelles, the ideal escape..
Our Founding Members
Some of the leading exponents of responsible travel offer trips through our site (more)
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RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL
www.responsibletravel.com

BBC VOTE 2001
www.news.bbc.co.uk/vote2001

LEGALSHOP
www.legalshop.co.uk

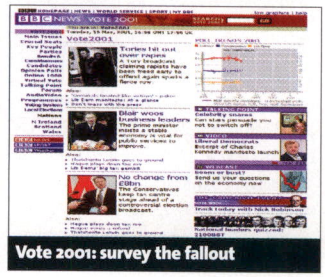
DRUGSCOPE
www.drugscope.org.uk

TRIPS FOR THE HIP

That tourism brings business to local people is a justification for built-up holiday resorts which is too often abused. The truth – that tourism just as easily devastates the environment while cheating local people out of employment – can be rather more difficult to stomach as you sip your Martini at the poolside.

But if you pick your holiday responsibly, you can have the break you dreamed of while causing minimum damage to the area you're visiting, and to its people. Responsible Travel (***www.responsibletravel.com***) acts as a shop window for tour operators offering holidays which are to travel what organic is to food, the main emphasis being on the importance of mutual benefit between tourists and their host country. Search by country, holiday style and accommodation type for breaks in over 30 countries. And although the holidays are 'green', there's no lack of luxury. Choose a family holiday in the popular Wyndham Morgan Bay hotel on St Lucia and relax in the knowledge that it disposes of its waste water in a way that won't harm the environment. For more adventurous types, over 83 percent of the cost of a Himalayan biking trail stays in India rather than going to middlemen.

If you've ever wondered whether your clear conscience helps to give organic food a better flavour, it's worth considering that responsible travel probably makes for a more fulfilling experience, too.



Vote 2001: survey the fallout

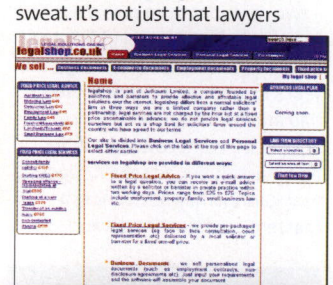
X MARKS THE SPOT

With the fallout from the General Election still rumbling on, the user-friendly election area of BBC News (***news.bbc.co.uk/vote2001***) should prove the best place to round up all the ballot-box action. Here you'll find each party's policies on all the key issues, in-depth profiles of all the leading politicians, and a database of every candidate. Analyses of public view research opinion on a range of issues, from each party's handling of race to which party leader you'd to have a drink with (it seems most people wouldn't want a drink with any of them).

Want to find out just what kind of effect your vote has had? You can test it out on the Virtual Vote which includes an online Swingometer to rival the infamous device used by Peter Snow on election night. And if pretending to be Snow isn't enough, you can even try your hand at being a party leader, find out what happens to your poll ratings when you decide to add a penny onto tax. You'll be able to view the results of the election in full, and use the glossary to make sure you don't miss any important terms. The audio-visual section includes archival footage of elections since 1945.

SEE YOU IN COURT

The mere mention of legal fees is enough to bring anyone out in a sweat. It's not just that lawyers seem to get away with charging what they like for their services – hourly fees of hundreds of pounds are the norm – but that their final bill is usually calculated according to the length of the job. And that, of course, is at the sometimes dubious discretion of the lawyer.



Legalshop: cuts through the jargon

Many everyday legal services, however, require only standard procedures, which means there's no reason why they can't be charged according to a set tariff. As an extension of the Net Award-winning Freelawyer (***www.freelawyer.co.uk***), which offers free legal info online, Legalshop (***www.legalshop.co.uk***) provides access to individual advice and services from local lawyers for a fixed, one-off and not unreasonable fee set by the site. Another effort to save people thousands of pounds is the option to email one of the site's barristers to find out for a charge of £25.75 whether legal services are actually necessary; sometimes it's

possible to solve the problem with simple negotiations instead. You can also buy personalised legal documents from the site, and coming soon is a legal plan especially for small businesses. Like Freelawyer, Legalshop is bound to get up the noses of old-school lawyers, but when their fees continue to cripple people trying to put the law into practice, it's hard not to like it.

NET NARCOTICS

Eighties fashion might be the latest retro-chic, but the same can't be said for the decade's anti-drugs campaign, Just Say No, a naive attempt to protect young people from the dangers of drug abuse. Certainly, following the recent death of 19-year-old Lorna Spinks from an overdose of ecstasy, it's clear that diktats aren't enough. These days, the approach to fighting drug abuse is more considered, based on understanding drugs and why people take them. This understanding comes from information: new site Drugscope (***www.drugscope.org.uk***) is a fittingly vast, authoritative and accessible resource.

The Drug Search provides detailed information on the nature and effect of all drugs as well as their history and how the UK law views them; there are separate entries for a comprehensive list of related subjects and terms, such as Acid House music, drug testing, peer pressure and withdrawal. To provide access to as much information as possible, the site also offers an invaluable library of 80,000 research and documents, and a bibliography.

Another vital part of the site is the Drugscope Helpfinder, which allows drug users or those concerned about them to search for local drug treatment and care services in the UK. Study Safely, for college and university students, offers the kind of frank no-nonsense guidelines to drug safety which might have saved Lorna Spinks. Proof that information can be worthwhile as well as worthy.

Drugscope: it'll get you sorted

Look what we've found!

THE LONDON EYE What do South Bank visitors surf for before they climb on the big wheel?

ANDREAS GOLDMAN
ELECTRICAL ENGINEER

I mostly use the Internet to research engineering firms and look up data sheets using the Swiss search engine at ***www.search.ch***. I also use it to look up information about computers.

NICK ROBERTSON
CAMERA SALESMAN

I use the Net to send emails to people, as well as to buy tickets for things like shows and travelling. I also tend to look at the *Motorcycle News* Internet site at ***www.motorcyclenews.com*** quite a lot.

CLAIRE AMIAS
ACTRESS

I use the Internet mostly for looking up notes on acting – there's a lot of tips on the Net for writing your CV and things like that. I usually find the sites through Google (***www.google.co.uk***).

IMOGEN CHURCH
DRAMA STUDENT

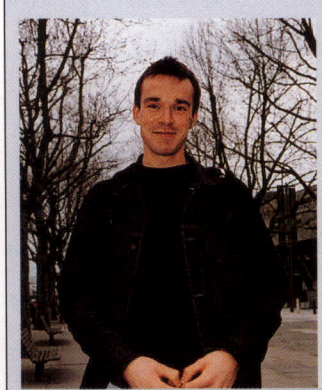
I use the Net for Hotmail (I have an account), but I also use it for acting-related Web sites as well. The other site I really like is The IMDb (***www.imdb.com***).

JAMES GRAY
BUILDING SURVEYOR

I use the Net for work, but also for enjoyment. If I'm looking to go out in London, I surf to see what's on. I also enjoy my friend's site: ***www.ambulance-chasers.co.uk***.

TONY CROKE
PUBLIC SERVANT

I use the Net to find information about travel and products, but also to send emails. I'd say that one of my favourite sites is Lonely Planet (***www.lonelyplanet.com***).

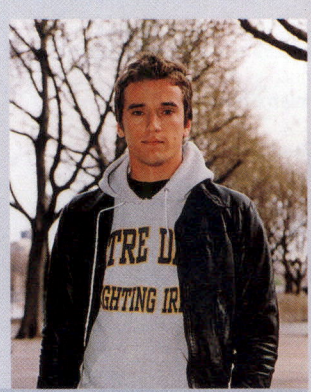


MATT DAVIS
BROADCAST JOURNALIST

I use the Internet for work and for booking tickets generally, but also for buying things and finding out information. I would say that BBC News Online (***news.bbc.co.uk***) is my favourite site.

SELENA CUNNINGHAM
SCRIPT EDITOR

This morning I subscribed to The Bookseller (***www.thebookseller.com***) to find out about new releases over the coming months. I also use the IMDb and a new film site called Netribution (***www.netribution.co.uk***).



WILLIAM MOORE
DESIGNER

I get information from the Web, and also use it to exchange documents and references with other designers. I guess that my favourite site is Ask Jeeves! (***www.ask.co.uk***).

INTERVIEWS: JENNIFER KEARNS; PICTURES: RICHARD LAWRENCE

letters

Send your letters to: Inbox, *the net*, 38-42 Hampton Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0JE or email us at ***thenetnow@haynet.com***

Dear Sir

LETTER OF THE MONTH

What Desperate Dad (June issue) may not realise is that even if he decides to opt for BT AnyTime – so his kids can surf the Web as much as they like without running up an astronomical phone bill – he can still have control over how much time they spend glued to a computer monitor. This would ensure that he sees enough of them to remember what they look like. There is a range of filtering software available which, as well as allowing parents to choose what sites their children can and can't access, also allows you to limit the amount of time during which they have access to the Net.

And if you don't want to discourage them from taking time to do their homework, there's no reason to give in to the plaintive argument that they have to browse the entire Web in order to do it properly. Ask them which sites their teacher has recommended, or give them 15 minutes to find, say, three that they can use; then set the filter so that they can't use any others without asking you first. They'll be all too pleased to log off as soon as they've done their work.

There's no need to be a killjoy, either. Let the kids use the Internet for fun, but again, ask them to choose just a handful of sites so that they get fed up soon enough, switch off the monitor and go and do something less boring instead.

Of course, you might want to consider why your kids are choosing the company of the Internet over yours. Certainly, if you're the kind of person who insists on referring to 'the wife', then it's no wonder she's desperate to get on the Internet as much as she can, too.

Helen Greene, via email

Dear Sir

As I work in the supermarket business, I read your Supertest on supermarket sites (June issue) with great interest. I am bemused by the 'Top Site' accolade going to Tesco. A fantastic site is of no use to anyone if the products offered for sale are not actually there – which in this case, with 'over a quarter' of the products ordered substituted, would seem to be the case.

You called Tesco 'the best site around' for price, choice, and quality of service. If you compare with the rest though, this does not follow: the price paid was the most – due to the substitutions I expect, but the price still stands. Substitutions of a higher value? Choice is sadly let down with the actual availability of products. And as for quality of service, if you've been sent products (substitutions) that you didn't order, and the price you were expecting to pay has changed, then how can this be deemed good customer service?

Richard Hayes, via email

The Tesco site does allow you to specify no substitutions whatsoever, although that does make life difficult – our article made the point that no supermarket site is perfect, by any means, but Tesco's excels in more areas than any other. Are you a Sainsbury's man perchance?

Dear Sir

How is it now possible to get two hours of music on a 64Mb memory card (May issue) when most songs use up about five or six Mb, meaning you should only be able to get about 10 songs on there?

Trautmann65, via email

Fair point – although compressing your files in a program such as MusicMatch will allow you between 20 and 25 tracks at a pretty decent sound quality.

Dear Sir

I recently solved a long-standing and immensely irritating problem which other readers may have experienced.

After using Outlook and disconnecting from the Internet, the Dial Up Networking (DUN) window suddenly started appearing of its own accord. I would have to click 'close' twice in order to get rid of it.

Puzzled, I began to uncheck all Outlook and Internet Explorer operations which were 'automatic' – to no avail. I looked at every setting and option in both programs but found nothing suspicious. After several weeks of frustration I began to get desperate – I uninstalled Outlook. Still it kept happening and worse, it now also happened when I had been using Internet Explorer.

Then I had a breakthrough. The DUN window appeared after I re-booted my machine. It therefore had nothing to do with Outlook or Internet Explorer – it was a Start program. Sure enough, the Black Ice Defender software was set to automatically check for updates every three days. Unchecking this option solved my problem at last.

My grouse is this – I have been caused weeks of frustration and annoyance, all because my firewall software kept firing up DUN but not telling my why. A simple dialogue box asking if I wanted to check for updates would have saved all this hassle.

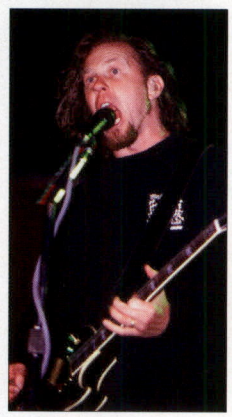
Barbara Polglaze, via email

There is no easy answer to this problem. With so many applications making online updates available, the only solution is to check when you install new software. Applications such as virus checkers need frequent updating, but there will probably be a Preferences option to switch these to manual updates.

A reader rants

Napster is not the end...

There's no denying that Napster is a great bit of software; it's enabled music fans to trace songs they haven't heard for years. What is Joe Public meant to do if, for example, he tries to play his old copy of *Hysteria* by Def Leppard on vinyl and he finds it is scratched – spend another £12 to £17 buying the album on CD? Is that fair? I now have three copies of the damn thing – one each on vinyl, tape and CD, but that's getting beside the point. Aren't Metallica and their ilk making enough money already? As for the record companies, we all know how loaded they all are.



Metallica's beef is that Napster allows people to download their songs from the Internet instead of buying the albums, which is true, I suppose. What Metallica don't realise is that they won't stop MP3s being swapped just by trying to shut down Napster. What about the other MP3 Web sites that exist? There are thousands of them and I'd put money on at least a quarter of them having Metallica tracks posted on their sites.

The MP3 revolution will not stop. No matter how the record industry or the artists try to shut Napster or any other site down, when one closes, another four or five will pop up in its place. It's time for the industry to start taking the geeks seriously for a change. Ladies and gentlemen, MP3 will never die. Why won't the recording industry succeed? Go to any search engine, search for MP3s and check the number of sites that pop up. That's why.

David Williams, via email

WINE FOR WORDS!

The writer of Letter of the Month wins a case of fine wine from Rouge-Blanc.com, the award-winning Web site bringing 'Calais prices' to your door.

PICTURES: PA; ANGELA LUBRANO/LIVE

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All roads lead here

UPMYSTREET ***www.upmystreet.com*** Where the World Wide Web visits your neighbourhood

SOMETIMES THE BEST IDEAS ARE the result of complete coincidence. UpMyStreet is a perfect example.

Today, this local information provider par excellence serves up around three million page impressions a month and has just embarked on a huge ad campaign which sees its URL plastered on buses and train stations the length and breadth of the land. Awards and plaudits come flooding in on a weekly basis, while solvency is unlikely to be a worry in the near future. Two years ago, however, no one was taking the idea seriously.

In fact, UpMyStreet began life as a happy accident: back in 1998, a Web design consultancy called Aztec Internet was looking to showcase its database-building skills for potential clients. Aztec's boffins decided to create a small site offering freely-available local area info in a particularly useable way – by simply entering your postcode, you could bring up details on your neighbourhood's average property prices, crime rates and school performance.

What Aztec didn't realise at the time was that their technology wasn't just extremely clever but seductively useful too. Although it's perfectly possible for anyone to find details of their council tax bands, local crime rate or nearby schools, to have every option just a click away was unprecedented.

Word soon got around of UpMyStreet's charms, and demand became so great that launching as a stand-alone site was inevitable. Aztec spun off into a new company to host the site, and the page views soon escalated to a million a month. A legend was born.

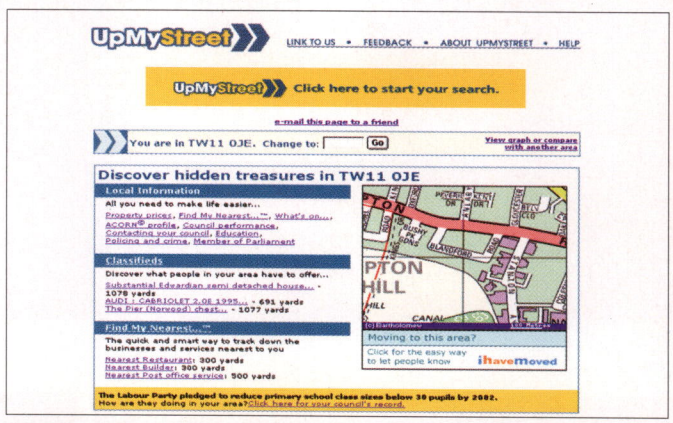
Ever since, it's been hard to find anyone with a bad word to say about UpMyStreet. Their content may not be earth-shattering but it's always effective and easy to understand and the site's basic remit has changed little since its inception: social demographic statistics (average income, home ownership etc), council details and direct links to local MPs have been added to the general mix of information but most people, says managing director Tony Blin-Stoyle, come for the schools and house prices. What's unique is that such information is open to all through the Web – only a lengthy visit to a library or Town Hall could uncover such vital data offline. 'It could only be done on the Net,' admits Blin-Stoyle. 'We were determined to build something people would really want to use.'

Most of UpMyStreet's info is bought on licence from councils or central government before being collated into a huge database to form the nucleus of the site. England and Wales are fully covered, and a comprehensive Scottish service is nearing completion.

So why has such a simple idea become so unfeasibly popular? It's UpMyStreet's practical uses which have proved particularly appealing: for those moving house or trying to locate a business, local demographics, council tax prices and the like are vitally important. Moreover, there's an inherent curiosity to be satiated by trawling through the wealth of info relating to your own postcode – just how much are houses going for these days? Is your old school the best in the area? How does the crime rate compare with the town down the road? (One of the wonders of the site is the ability to contrast two postcodes' differing statistics, thus settling hundreds of pub arguments in one fell swoop.)

And how will the Streeters make their millions? Through licensing their research for other sites and services to use, selling localised classified ads and utilising their innovative Find My Nearest... service, which lists the closest restaurants, hotels, hospitals, taxis, shops and more when you input your magic letter/number combo.

Expansion into Europe, the States and even the Far East has been discussed but rejected due to practical difficulties (Blin-Stoyle: 'We'd love to be appealing to a billion people in China, but how much of that info would be readily available?'), so UpMyStreet will concentrate on conquering digital TV and wireless – locating a handy curry house at midnight will always be a marketable tool, after all. And the drive to increase site traffic has stepped up with that lavish ad campaign, taking the name to the nation for the first time. Accidents, they say, will happen – but some have extremely positive outcomes...


UpMyStreet
LINK TO US • FEEDBACK • ABOUT UPMYSTREET • HELP
UpMyStreet Click here to start your search.
e-mail this page to a friend
You are in TW11 0JE. Change to: Go
View graph or compare with another area
Discover hidden treasures in TW11 0JE
Local Information
All you need to make life easier...
Property prices, Find My Nearest...™, What's on...,
ACORN® profile, Council performance,
Contacting your council, Education,
Policing and crime, Member of Parliament
Classifieds
Discover what people in your area have to offer...
Substantial Edwardian semi detached house... - 1078 yards
AUDI : CABRIOLET 2.0E 1995... - 691 yards
The Pier (Norwood) chest... - 1077 yards
Find My Nearest...™
The quick and smart way to track down the businesses and services nearest to you
Nearest Restaurant: 300 yards
Nearest Builder: 300 yards
Nearest Post office service: 500 yards
Moving to this area?
Click for the easy way to let people know
ihavemoved
The Labour Party pledged to reduce primary school class sizes below 30 pupils by 2002.
How are they doing in your area? Click here for your council's record.

:UPMYSTREET.COM

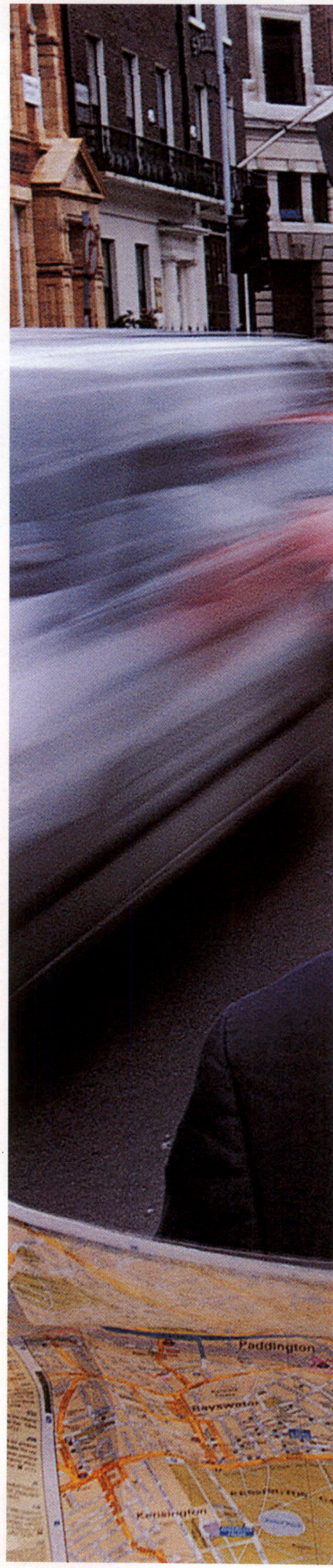
WHAT IS IT?
Directory of local info, including house prices, schools, councils and crime, accessible by typing in a postcode

LAUNCHED
October 1998

TRAFFIC
Currently averaging three million page impressions a month

BASE
London

KEY FEATURES
Huge classified ad section and Find My Nearest... service, which seeks out local amenities and businesses, performance targets for schools, comparing one area with another



UpMyStreet's Blin-Stoyle: in the fast lane

WORDS: ROBERT JEFFERY; PICTURE: RICHARD LAWRENCE

CAMPING EQUIPMENT | SHOPPING ONLINE

Carry on camping

Top sites for the evergreen thrifty holiday

Camping has always been a favourite holiday for those strapped for cash. But if you can't afford an exotic trip you won't want to buy expensive gear, either, so we found a vanload of sites where you can stock up on everything you'll need to be comfortable in the countryside without paying the price of a week in the Caribbean.

You might think the ongoing foot-and-mouth epidemic would have put an end to all rural pursuits, but the Outdoor Megastore (***www.outdoormegastore.co.uk***) provides a long list of UK campsites where it's business as usual. Campers will be grateful, too, for the cut-price online shop, which comprises mainly mid- or budget-price brands. With Campus tents and Ajungilak sleeping bags from just £39.99 each, and a Campingaz Twister stove at £17.99, we'd bagged the essential kit for under £100.

For more on how foot-and-mouth affects campers, Field & Trek (***www.field-trek.co.uk***) offered links to several relevant sites. Their own site also had detailed advice on choosing clothing, footwear and equipment, though the selection of goods for sale was fairly limited and there was only the odd bargain – such as the North Face Talkeetna Parka jacket, some £60 cheaper than from other retailers.

The enthusiastic WildDay (***www.bridgemill.co.uk***) also offered words of wisdom on buying camping gear, but had a much bigger range of stock for every type of camper, from festival goers to professional mountaineers, with very competitive prices throughout. Its smart and sensible layout also made it easy to navigate.

Blacks (***www.blacks.co.uk***) had a wide range of categories, including an area especially for women. There wasn't a huge selection of big brand names, and only a few bargains, but there were good-value alternatives in Blacks' own-brand sleeping bags and rucksacks; in particular their 75l backsystem Mondial rucksack seemed very reasonable at £59.99.

Most of the goods at Cotswold's site (***www.cotswold-outdoor.com***) were full-price, but the excellent range of products and brands, as well as lots of helpful information and tips, made their attractive site perhaps the best online version of a high-street outdoor store.

In a similar league was 9feet.com (***www.9feet.com***), whose cheapest tent, the two-man Coleman Cobra, was still a pricey £100. Karrimor dominated the rucksacks, however, which made them reasonable, though many items were expensive pieces of kit for serious explorers. Still, the site was very well stocked, professional and easy to use.

STOVE £14.54
www.blacks.co.uk
Original-style camping stove ideal for any one-pan meal. Find sophisticated versions here, too, as well as a broad range of essentials.

The stylish Snow and Rock site (***www.snowandrock.com***) had an extensive selection of top labels, and top prices to match, though they had an impressive number of departments, too, including watches and water filters, and an extensive selection of packet-sealed foods. Many were organised irritatingly by brand, but with the Advanced Search we were able to search by price for some affordable items.

At the other end of the scale came Outdoorgear.co.uk (***www.outdoorgear.co.uk***), aimed at the humbler type of camper and a smaller wallet. As well as having an enormous range of items, it was definitely one of the best bargain stores we found (due largely to a lack of big-price labels). Even the most expensive two-man tent, the Khyam Igloo, was £199.99; sleeping bags started at £11.99.

The Complete Outdoors choice (***www.completeoutdoors.co.uk***) was rather narrow but contained some fair prices for quality brands and the occasional bargain, such as Brasher Hillmaster Classic walking boots at £85.99 – £5 less than at 9feet.com. An enthusiastic if amateur-looking site, it also had lots of useful advice on outdoor clothing and equipment.

Wiz2 (***www.wiz2.co.uk***) seemed hampered by technical problems, the range of stock in Ski and Outdoor Bargains was very scant (just four sleeping bags) and you had to phone to place your order. But with deals like the Lowe Alpine Alpine Pro Jacket cut from £220 to £124.99, or Karrimor's 70-95 litre rucksack cut to £109 from the RRP of £150, it hid some incredible bargains.

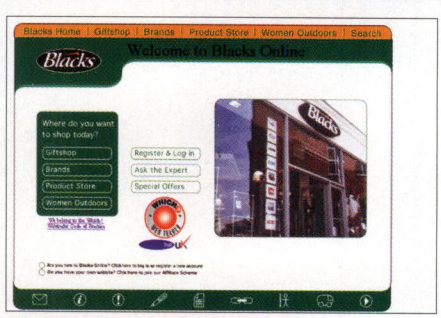
Camping is meant to be a thrifty holiday, and with these sites you'll be able to keep the tradition going without making any more compromises to your comfort than you'd expect from sleeping outdoors during a British summer.

:-) Our top camping sites

OUTDOOR
Mega Store
The massive on-line outdoor equipment discount warehouse
Welcome to the discount warehouse for many of Europe's leading outdoor suppliers. We have thousands of lines at unbelievable prices.
Deals of the month
The Camping Season's almost here!
Fast & Mouth Latest
SECURE ON LINE ORDERING

OUTDOOR MEGASTORE
www.outdoormegastore.co.uk
A friendly online warehouse with an enormous range of outdoor equipment at discount prices.

WILDDAY
www.bridgemill.co.uk
Something for everyone, from first-time festival-goer to Everest climber, all at competitive prices.



BLACKS
www.blacks.co.uk
Respectable online store with selected own-line goods a good-value alternative to known brands.

WORDS: ALEX NEWBY; PICTURES: NICK WRIGHT

TENT £99.99
www.outdoorgear.co.uk
A versatile and lightweight tent erectable in minutes – ideal if the clouds look set to burst.

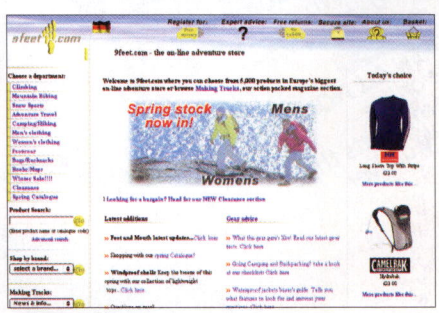
60-LITRE RUCKSACK £49.99
www.outdoorgear.co.uk
A bargain, this: a sturdy Karrimor rucksack with plenty of room for woolies, waterproofs and even a hairdryer.

PACKET MEALS FROM £3
www.snowandrock.co.uk
These meals are among Snow and Rock's copious supplies for more adventurous campers – though they look safe enough.

NON-STICK PANS £22.49
www.blacks.co.uk
Ideal when hot, soapy water's in short supply, this Tefal set was cheaper from Blacks than from any other site we explored.

SWISS ARMY PEN KNIFE £49.50
www.completeoutdoors.co.uk
This ultimate Swiss Army knife was among a handful of hidden bargains on this impressive site.

COTSWOLD
www.cotswold-outdoor.com
Attractive site carrying an excellent range of stock, though with only a few special offers.



9FEET.COM
www.9feet.com
Not a cheap site, but with extensive and smart stock, ideal for more serious enthusiasts.

OUTDOORGEAR.CO.UK
www.outdoorgear.co.uk
Cheap, cheerful but tried and tested brands at this packed site, our favourite bargain store.

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THE SITES, SOFTWARE, HARDWARE, AND PEOPLE
AWARDS 2001
Over 100 million sites whittled down to the best 18
ARE YOU READY TO GO WIRELESS?
We unveil the new mobile Internet
THE GOOD NET GAMING GUIDE
Sit down, relax and start a war
ON TEST!
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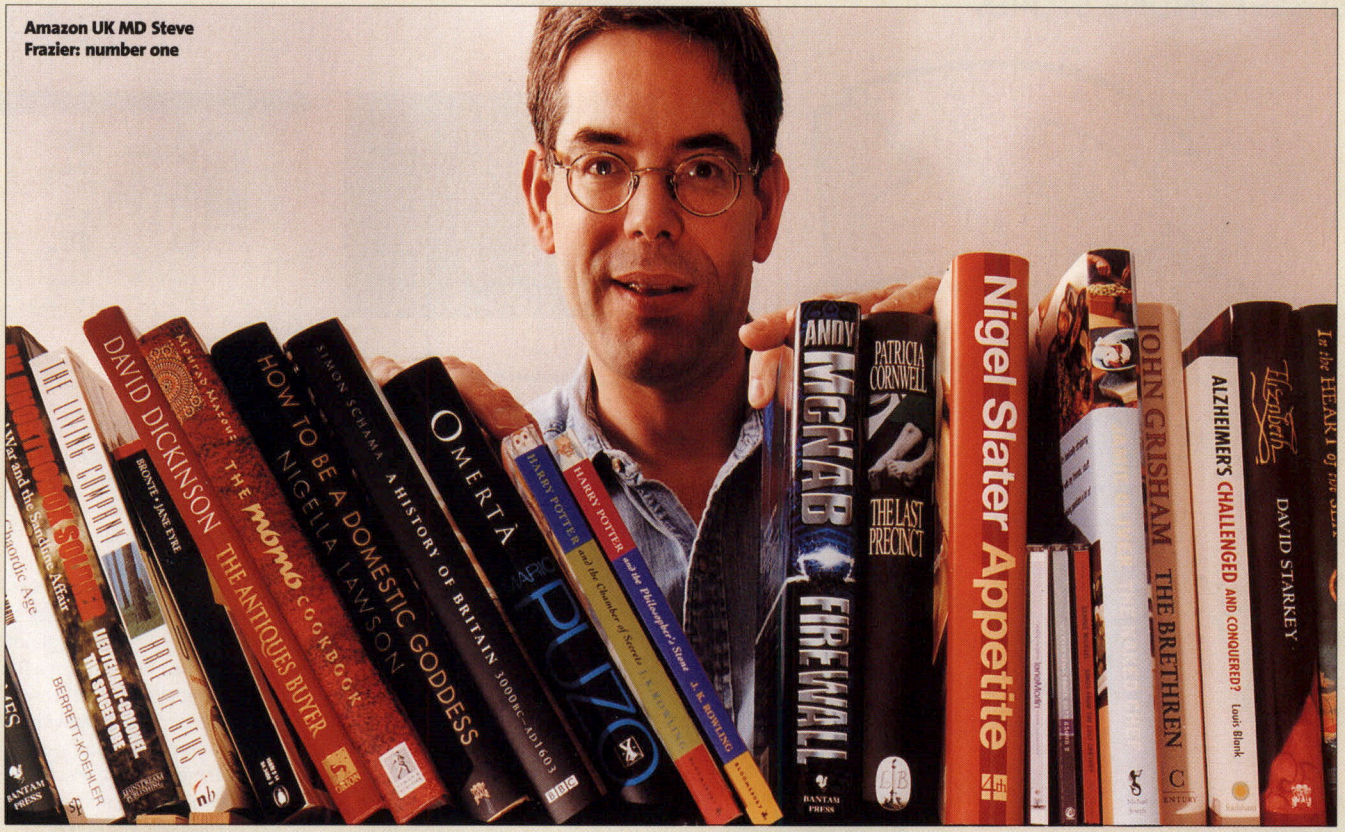
The World's 20 Best Online Stores

You can buy anything online – but that doesn't mean you should. Presenting the shops we can prove deliver the goods


Nigel Slater Appetite
ANDY McNAB FIREWALL
PATRICIA CORNWELL THE LAST PRECINCT
JOHN GRISHAM THE BRETHREN
ALZHEIMER'S CHALLENGED AND CONQUERED? Louis Blank
DAVID STARKEY
DAVID DICKINSON THE ANTIQUES BUYER
THE MOMO COOKBOOK
NIGELLA LAWSON HOW TO BE A DOMESTIC GODDESS
SIMON SCHAMA A HISTORY OF BRITAIN 3000BC-1603
OMERTÀ
HARRY POTTER and the Philosopher's Stone J.K. ROWLING
HARRY POTTER and the Chamber of Secrets
PLUTO
THE LIVING COMPANY
BERRETT-KOEHLER
BANTAM PRESS
Amazon UK MD Steve Frazier: number one

1 AMAZON

www.amazon.co.uk

The original and best bookstore

We'd leave the DVDs to Play247 and the CDs to CD-Wow (see below), but for books Amazon just can't be beaten. There's a vast selection available, with generous discounts on the most popular titles, and all presented clearly, complete with plenty of info so you're not buying blind. Amazon's efficient categorisation and search facility means it's easy to track down what you're looking for, and its suggestions list is great for introducing you to new authors.

Amazon: great range

There's also a great range of supporting services, including gift vouchers, present wrapping and the facility to create a wish-list of items that your friends and family can access for gift inspiration.

Amazon has quite a complex delivery-charge structure, which can make it pricey to order single items, but just add in one of its bestsellers – the top 10 paperbacks and hardbacks are always available at half price – and you're quids in. Most items arrive in a couple of days, but it's easy to track the status of your order online and regular email updates inform you of its progress. A genuinely innovative and consistently professional service.

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CHECK OUT SOME EXTRAORDINARY BARGAINS
ALBUM OF THE WEEK - DESTINY'S CHILD - Survivor
NEW RELEASES!
OUR TOP 20
PRE-ORDER HERE!

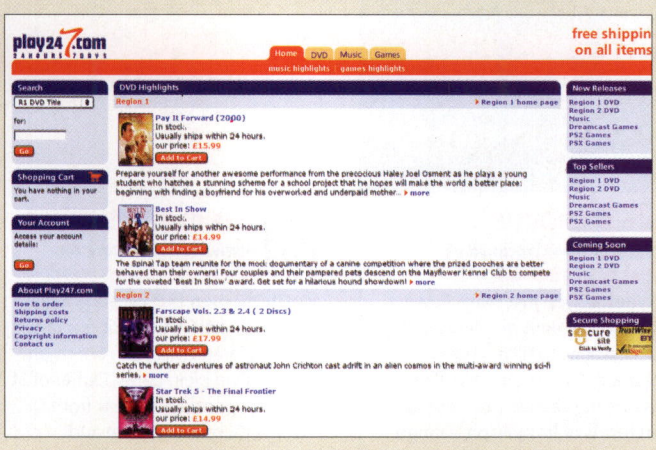
2 CD-WOW

www.cd-wow.com

Cut-price CDs

It sounds too good to be true, but it isn't – all the leading CDs available for just £8.99, including free delivery. Admittedly, it's not great for the more obscure titles, but you'll find the top 75 chart CDs plus new releases and special offers (typically just-out-of-chart discs for £6.99).

There's also pre-release information and ordering and a new cassette department, where a limited range of tapes are on trial for just £5.99. The site can be a bit clunky at times, but it gets there, with the same to be said for the delivery process – orders sometimes take a little longer than the 5-7 days estimate, but at this price, who cares? Sometimes, saving money is all the incentive you need to get surfing.



3 PLAY 247

www.play247.com

UK and US DVDs

Play 247 sells games and music too, but it's the DVD selection that's fantastic – there's a wide range, excellent prices and free, fast delivery. All the leading US (Region One) and UK (Region Two) titles are there, which means you'll be able to get films on your doorstep as soon as they're released Stateside, plus a great back catalogue, all searchable by title, genre, actor or director. There's a lot of information about each disc, including technical data (screen ratio, sound type) and details of any DVD extras, such as documentaries and deleted scenes. If you're not happy sending your credit card details across cyberspace, you can order by phone if you want. It's also easy to track your order, which will typically arrive in 2-3 days.

»

WORDS: ?; PICTURES: KEVIN FEBRUARY

4 MOONPIG

www.moonpig.com

Customisable greetings cards for all

No more tedious lunchtime trawls around card shops – just visit Moonpig. It stocks more than 350 cards, covering every occasion, which can be searched through via its handy choose-a-card feature. Many can be customised, both on the front and inside, to make them exactly what you're looking for. All cards – even ones you've personalised – cost £1.99 plus 30p delivery, and can be sent unsealed to you or sealed and stamped direct to the recipient. There are great extras, too, such as an email reminder service for key events, and an online address book. A great example of a Net-specific service which actually works.

5 MAJESTIC

www.majestic.co.uk

Wine, beer and more

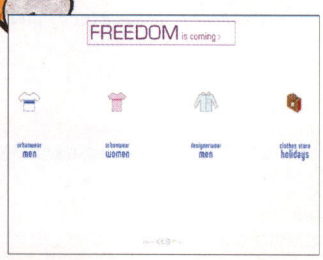
Other wine sites may have more frills, but Majestic is unbeatable for range, value and fast, convenient delivery. You order online and then they call to arrange a specific delivery time – two-hour slots, including weekends and evenings – and if you're near one of Majestic's 93 local stores, delivery is free. If not, your order will be delivered for a flat fee of £5, Monday-Friday. Either way, it's guaranteed to get there within a week. Minimum order is a case of wine, but there's a great selection, loads of special offers, and you can order beer and soft drinks, too. There's also an impressively fast wine advice service via email. With new wine sites springing up all the time, it's good to know there's a first choice out there.

8 CROCUS

www.crocus.co.uk

Plants and flowers

Whether you just want flowers as a gift or enough plants and accessories to fill a whole garden, Crocus can help. This is one impressive site – not just in terms of its awesome range (over 8,000 plants, tools and gifts), but in the amount of support information and the care taken with your deliveries. Choose your product from the detailed descriptions, arrange delivery (from £3.95 depending on the item), and if you're in a designated area you can even get a gardener to come and bed the plant in for you. Crocus also offers an innovative garden design by email service and maintenance services. Nice.



9 THE CLOTHES STORE

www.theclothesstore.com

Classic clothes and shoes

Mostly for men, but with a growing women's section, this stocks a range of classic brands, like Ben Sherman shirts, Calvin Klein pants, Duffer of St George tops and footwear from Dr Marten, Kickers, Converse and Skechers. A designer section adds clobber from Burberry, Paul Smith and Patrick Cox. The online range is rather limited, but find out the product number and you can order any item from the brands the site carries. Pricing is competitive and delivery (two to 10 days) is free. Online clothing may be a somewhat sketchy area, but this is a hidden gem that's well worth visiting.

10 EXPEDIA

www.expedia.co.uk

Travel specialist

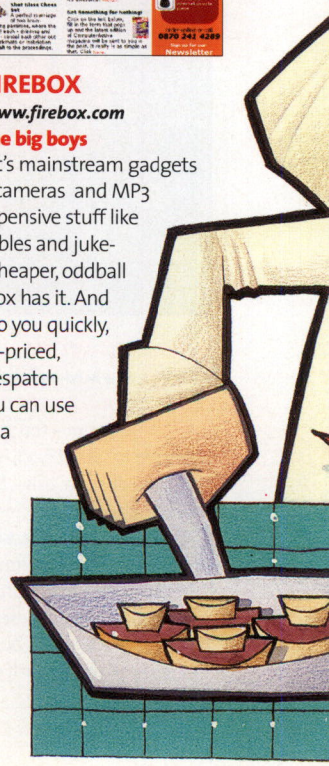
This Microsoft-owned travel portal covers everything from hotels and hire cars to full holidays and insurance, but it's the flight-booking service that is particularly impressive. Easy-to-use flight timetables and fare trackers make it simple to plan the best-priced trip possible, and there are some great last-minute deals. Another particularly useful feature is the ability to book internal US flights – something that's notoriously difficult to do with the US airlines and travel agencies direct if you haven't got an American address and credit card.

11 FIREBOX

www.firebox.com

Toys for the big boys

Whether it's mainstream gadgets like PDAs, cameras and MP3 players, expensive stuff like football tables and juke-boxes, or cheaper, oddball gifts, Firebox has it. And it'll get it to you quickly, via its well-priced, 24-hour despatch service. You can use the site as a catalogue and order by phone. Reliable, fast and great value.



6 GAMEPLAY

www.gameplay.co.uk

Everything for gamers

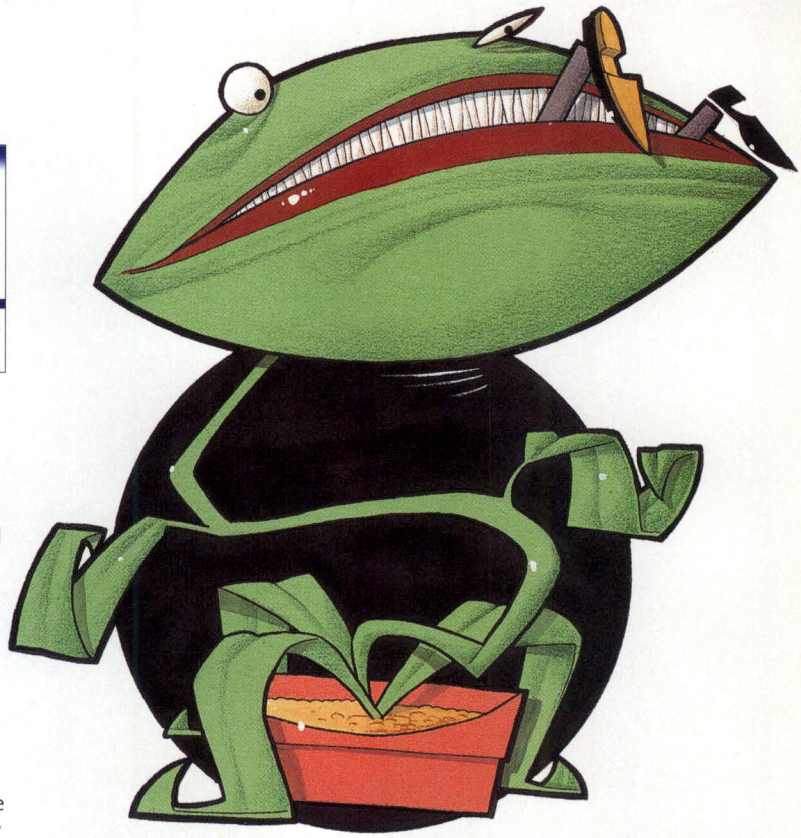
The site may be up for sale, but don't let that put you off – this is a quality, one-stop shop for everything gaming. It offers a great range of games for every format, complete with excellent pre- and post-sales advice. There are a range of delivery options, all well priced, so you can get that must-have game as soon as the next day. And you can pay by cheque as well as credit card. Gaming newbies need not be put off, either: clear explanations make this the ideal place to pick up a title as a present for a gamer, as well as widening your present collection. Add the Wireplay online gaming area, which has more dedicated servers and is more useable than just about any comparable service, and you'll be back...

7 LAKELAND LIMITED

www.lakelandlimited.com

Kitchen and homewares

Lakeland's site sells more than 1500 cunning but well-priced products, most of which you'd struggle to find elsewhere. It's easy to navigate around the four main sections: kitchenware, storage, other household products and a special selection of Delia-endorsed kit. Our orders have always arrived within days – sometimes the next day – and delivery is free for orders over £38 (£2.95 for smaller purchases). Great customer service, too, with the option to pay by credit card phone, or cheque.



12 EMPIRE DIRECT

www.empiredirect.co.uk

Electrical specialists

Forget out-of-town superstores – this site is consistently much cheaper for a wide range of electrical goods, from hi-fi and home entertainment to all domestic appliances. Delivery takes 3-5 days, and is charged by the item – from a couple of quid for smaller orders to £40 for a washing machine.

13 KITBAG

www.kitbag.com

Sports kit

Tons of choice for either armchair or active sports-lovers, including a vast range of replica football shirts (past and present) and training and leisurewear clobber from most of the leading brands. Features football, rugby, cricket and even NFL and F1 gear, with regular special offers – not always cheap, but certainly always cheerful.

14 LUXLOOK

www.luxlook.com

Designer accessories

Ideal for the latest must-have belts, bags and more without having to go into shops where snooty assistants sneer at you. Includes gear from Bvlgari, Dolce & Gabbana, Paul Smith and Vivienne Westwood – all beautifully presented with advice, too.

15 IRIS ONLINE

www.iris-online.co.uk

Contact lenses and specs

Iris stocks about every type of soft contact lens going – from disposable to yearly – plus solutions. Its prices are the best online (and much cheaper than at your local optician) and it'll deliver the next day. It's just launched an equally impressive designer specs site, too. »

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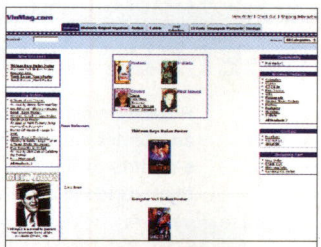
ntl: broadband internet

www.askntl.com



16 VINTAGE MAGAZINE COMPANY

www.vinmag.com

Film and TV memorabilia

An online version of the cavernous Brewer Street shop in London, this stocks everything from original magazine covers to film posters to t-shirts, life-size character cut-outs and more.

17 BLUE SNAKE

www.bluesnake.com

Everything weird and wacky

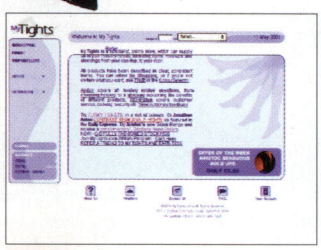
'Over the top, under the counter, off the wall' is how this site is accurately billed. It sells loads of weird stuff you never knew you wanted, from boxing-nun hand puppets to kangaroo-paw bottle openers and an impressive range of (gasp!) sex toys. The prompt delivery is a winner.

18 AS SEEN ON SCREEN

www.asseenonscreen.com

Buy what you see on TV or films

A truly innovative site, which tracks down and sells just about anything you could hope to see on TV or in films, from Geri's t-shirt to the X-Men's sunglasses, Graham Norton's phones to the telly smashed in 5ive's latest pop video. Delivery's free for any order over £50, and you can pay by cheque or bank transfer as well as credit card.

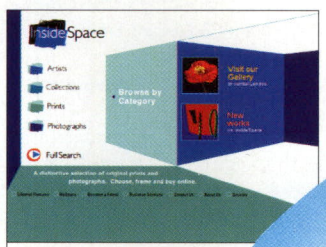


19 MY TIGHTS

www.mytights.com

Top brand hosiery – fast

No frills here, just a good range of leading-brand tights, stockings and hold-ups, all available for next-day delivery at just £2. Pricing is competitive and there's great style, colour and care advice, too. Ideal for women in a hurry and for men who want to understand more about the mysterious area that is lovely legwear – and just perfect for remedying those hosiery disasters without traipsing to the shops.



20 INSIDE SPACE

www.insidespace.co.uk

Buy and frame pics

Want something different for your walls? This site has an impressive range of unusual contemporary art and photographs, plus framing and mounting options (customisable or on expert advice). Many are limited editions, and thus aren't cheap, but at least you'll be getting an atypical collectable.

:E-COMMERCE WITHOUT CREDIT CARDS

Don't want to hand over your details? Welcome to the cashless world

When the words 'credit card' and 'Internet' are mentioned in the same sentence, it's usually to discuss payment security and how fear of fraud can put people off buying online. Moreover, there's another deterrent involving the two: the vast majority of online shops that only accept credit or debit cards.

But all isn't lost for those without a flexible friend, as sites are increasingly keen to get hold of your wedge any way they can. Take auction site eBay (*www.ebay.co.uk*) – it loved the Billpoint system (which allows you to pay by cheque or money order) so much it bought the company.

Sites spawned from a mail order business are also typically geared up to process other forms of payment. For example, our top 10 online shop, Lakeland Limited, takes cheques and postal orders as well as credit cards. At Great Universal (*www.greatuniversal.com*) you can apply for a credit account and pay interest-free over 20 weeks – you settle up by bank giro or cheque via post or at any Post Office. But only if you're over 18, which excludes another huge group of online shoppers.

eBay: now available without cards

One recent solution is Splash Plastic (*www.splashplastic.com*), a card you can top up with £10-200 of cash and then use to buy online at supporting sites – these already include top 5 shops CD Wow and Moonpig plus Sportsmart (*www.sportsmart.co.uk*) as well as many teen/student-oriented sites. Splash Plastic cards can be topped up at a range of newsagents, Paypoint and Payzone outlets and branches of Carphone Warehouse. Splash Cards are available to anyone over 14, with younger shoppers needing parental permission.

A similar system is run by another relative newcomer, InteractivCash, which involves you buying mobile phone-style vouchers with value codes at a range of high-street outlets. You can get more details at *www.interactivcash.com*.

And more options are on their way: Securicor has announced plans for an alternative online payment system, and Western Union is likely to extend its PayCash scheme, which is supported by top US sites.

DO TRADITIONAL STORES COMPARE WITH THEIR ONLINE RIVALS?

HOW THE HIGH STREET GIANTS MEASURE UP»

Traditional retailers were slow to jump on the e-commerce bandwagon – many assumed the Web would soon disappear, or that the money-making opportunities would be limited.

However, most high street stores now offer an Internet service – though not all of their e-commerce offerings match up to the service they provide to bricks-and-mortar customers.

We road-tested some of the best-known brands out there to see if they really did deliver. The results reveal some surprising over-acheivers, and some shocking must-do-betters...

STORE	URL	EASE OF USE	RANGE	VALUE	OVERALL
Boots	www.wellbeing.com	5/5	5/5	5/5	★★★★★

This is like being in the biggest Boots store ever – it sells 10,000 products! – complete with an Ask-the-Pharmacist service (answers come via email). There are the same special offers (three for two, buy one get one free, etc), price-per-quantity guides (eg £2.50 per 100ml) for each item and you can even earn Advantage Card points. With the standard (£2.50) delivery option, our well-packed selection – and a free gift – arrived in two days. Next day delivery (also available on Saturdays) costs £5.

Debenhams	www.debenhams.com	4/5	3/5	4/5	★★★★☆

Like the store, the site is subdivided into many departments, but it's quick and easy to use, and supported by a 24-hour customer service hotline if you get lost. The range is rather limited, except in the homewares category, where there's lots of choice and some great bargains. We ordered some kitchen utensils at a 25 percent discount and they arrived in two days. Delivery costs £2.95, or free with a Debenhams Gold Card. Extras include flower delivery and wedding list services.

John Lewis	www.johnlewis.com	4/5	3/5	4/5	★★★★☆

A cleanly-designed site that clearly pictures its products right the way through to the checkout stage. Apart from an outstanding home section, the range is more limited than the average JL store, covering gifts, men (but no women!), leisure and children, plus seasonal offerings (garden toys when we looked) and a link through to the massive Waitrose grocery site. We chose the basic delivery option (£3.25) and our incredibly well-packed gift order arrived two days later.

Woolworths	www.woolworths.co.uk	2/5	4/5	5/5	★★★☆☆

This site is just like walking into a Woolies store: it's bright, friendly, and full of an odd mix of value products, from laughably large chocolate bars to cards/gift wrap and competitively priced DVDs, videos and CDs. There's a great range of special offers, too, and unusually it costs less for cheaper (under £15) products to be delivered (£1.50); purchases over £15 cost £2.95 to deliver. Sadly, the chart DVD we ordered took two weeks to arrive, though the site graciously waived the delivery charge to make amends.

Marks & Spencer	www.marksandspencer.com	3/5	3/5	4/5	★★★☆☆

'More than 2,000 products available online', M&S's site claims, but you'd struggle to find them with this site's complex design. And although there's a great recipe section, there's no online food shopping yet. But what's there is the solid, well-priced core of the Marks and Sparks range – ideal if you need new shirts or undies, or larger sizes. Our order arrived in two days for the standard delivery fee of £2.95. And, as is M&S tradition, returns and refunds are a doddle.

Ryman	www.ryman.co.uk	3/5	4/5	3/5	★★★☆☆

This is a bit of a utilitarian site, and the menu structure's a bit confusing, but once you're in, there's a wealth of office products here – everything from stationery essentials to complex filing systems. But Ryman's definitely after big rather than small or home office business, as the only bargains to be had are bulk buys. Also beware that the prices quoted exclude VAT, and you only find out your full bill at checkout. Delivery's steep for small orders too – it's free over £30 but otherwise £4.50 plus VAT.

Dorothy Perkins	www.dorothyperkins.co.uk	3/5	2/5	4/5	★★★☆☆

We chose the women's fashion store at random from Arcadia's group of high street favourites (including Burton's, Top Shop, Top Man and Principles). The range was limited, but there were some great offers, with delivery costing just £1.95. When it came to payment, our corporate firewall stopped us from paying online – but the site soon identified this and gave us a number to call through which we completed the order in less than a minute. Our purchases arrived two days later.

Harrods	www.harrods.com	4/5	3/5	2/5	★★★☆☆

OK, so Harrod's isn't on every high street, but it's just about the best-known shop in Britain. Its online range features a selection of affordable Harrods-branded produce, from biscuits to teddy bears, plus many luxury items you'd struggle to find anywhere but the Knightsbridge store itself. Great for unusual if stupidly expensive gifts (£110 leather noughts and crosses, anyone?). The basic £5 delivery option got our more humble purchase to us in five days.

WHSmith	www.whsmith.co.uk	2/5	4/5	2/5	★★☆☆☆

There's a great range here – from books and games to magazines and even PCs. But anything beyond core products takes weeks to arrive, and the delivery-cost structure is complex and pricey. Our order confirmation was followed by an email saying our credit details were wrong and asking us to fax back the number; we politely declined. When we re-ordered from scratch, our book came in two days. Smith's acknowledge the error of the fax request and now link back from emails back to the secure part of the site.

BTinternet Anytime

For just 49p a day you can surf the Internet whenever you like.

How to master the Internet.

1

Peel off sleeve from above and remove CD.

2

Install the CD and enjoy.
(The CD is the round shiny thing.)

Look · Listen · Believe

LIVE is back, back as an annual show and back with all the very latest home entertainment brands and products to see, hear, touch and check out for yourself. This time we're going to The NEC, Birmingham, taking the Home Electronics Show to the heart of the country.

A smooth mix of brands will show the latest in the world of TV, DVD and video (not dead yet), both hardware and content, plus hi-fi and home cinema, MP3, games, digital cameras, personal organisers...the list goes on.

And of course it will include a choice selection of Internet brands, the physical representation of cyberspace, from ISPs to service providers with some seriously cool offerings. To whet your appetite, two already confirmed are iwantanewpc.co.uk, and you probably will, and ep-x.com who offer some fantastic mountain bikes and street gear. Now you will definitely want one of those.

Add mobile communications to the mix with 3G and bluetooth applications coming online, WAP starting to do what it is supposed to and you now have some serious convergence with other applications. How much do want from one day out?

You want more? Well we are already planning feature areas to include the ever popular Home Entertainment Zone plus two others currently under wraps. Keep an eye on these pages for more details.

At LIVE you will see some serious products but be warned, you'll leave wanting one of something...

Look, listen, believe...*put LIVE in your diary 21-23 September 2001.*

PROTECT ME FROM

LIVE 2001

The Home Electronics Show
THE NEC BIRMINGHAM
21-23 SEPTEMBER

LOOK · LISTEN · BELIEVE

MYSELF

Martin, 28, DVD fanatic

CALL 020 8307 2300

Thanks for the memories

The new wave of portable MP3 players are stylish, robust and bursting with capacity

THE PORTABLE MP3 PLAYER IS growing up. Only last year, there were many top-brand, big-selling machines that touted a mere 32Mb of memory – next to useless when you consider that the average MP3 file eats 4-5Mb (giving you an effective playing time of 30-45 minutes, less than most CDs).

But now all that is changing. The makers have wised up to real demands, meaning the latest generation of players can boast 64Mb. And as you're about to discover, some are now adding flash card technology into the mix, meaning your mobile music is no longer capped by the player's memory.

So the hardware is no longer the issue, leaving one question – what would you use one for? After all, the demise of Napster has put paid to the dream of free signed-artist tracks on demand. But maybe the pirates are missing a few points. Most of us are more concerned with the integrity of our collection and that our portable actually works.

The integrity issue is addressed quickly enough by a portable MP3 player – why risk scratching or losing your favourite CDs on the road or train when you can turn them into MP3 files on your home PC, transfer them to the portable and take it anywhere?

As for the issue of the portables actually working, an MP3 player suffers from none of the 'skip' endemic in some CD personals – you can run and jump until you're arrested, but your player won't lose any of the music.

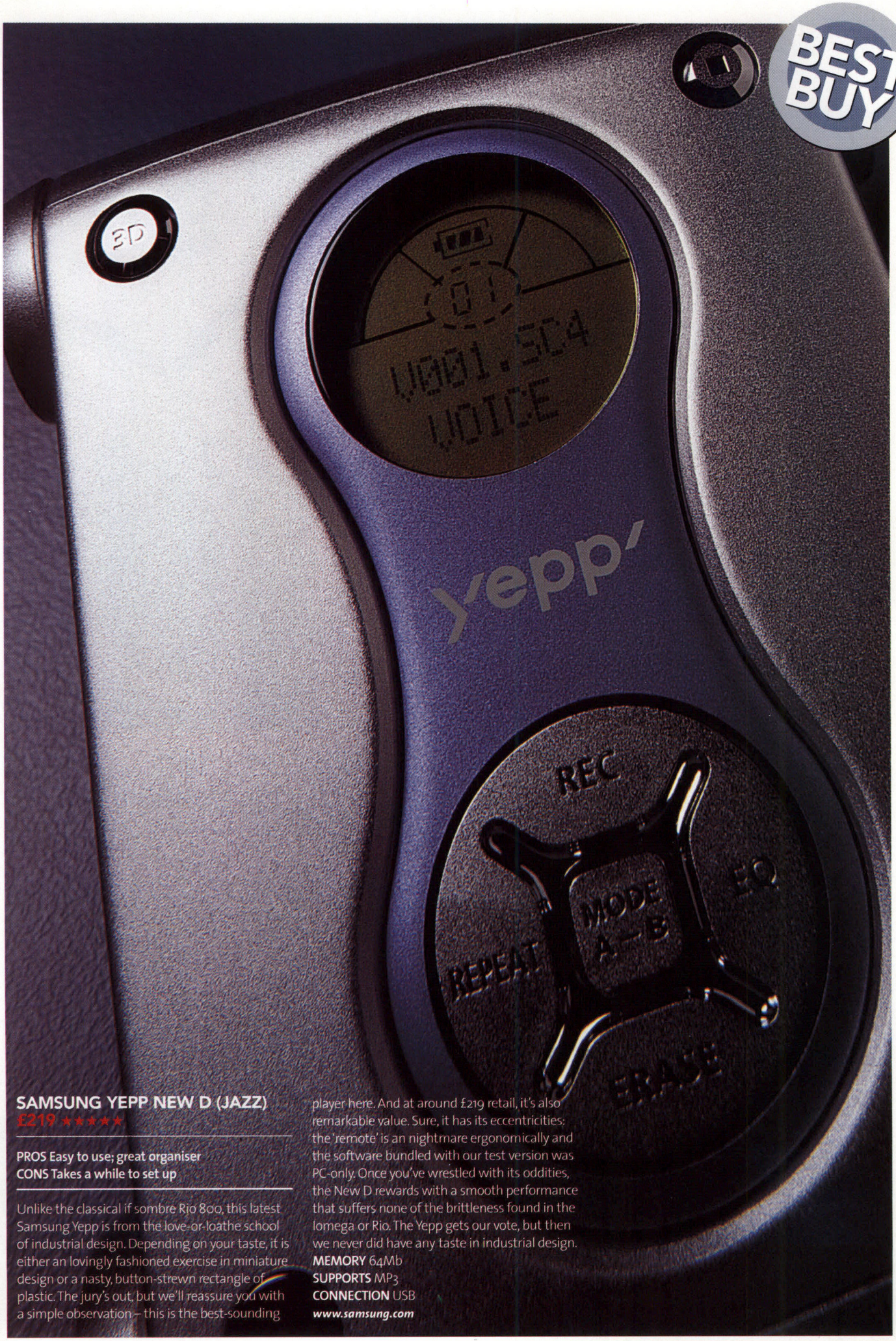
Finally, let's not forget your investment today may well pay off tomorrow. The signs are that the music industry will have to accept the Net as a popular way of buying sounds (take a look at ***www.emusic.com***, where one monthly fixed fee lets you download to your heart's content).

DIAMOND RIO 800 £299 ★★★★☆

PROS Attractive; light; easy to use; upgradable
CONS Slight sibilance to sound; the oval display could be made clearer

It's difficult not to get excited about the Rio 800. The company that virtually gave birth to the MP3 portable market had developed a reputation for players with rather average storage capacity, but no such fear with the newcomer; your basic model comes with 64Mb, but via a snap-on 'backpack' (which, of course, is an optional extra), this can be upped to 128Mb, offering up to four hours of music. Light, compact and attractive, the unit comes with the excellent SoundJam MP3 software bundled in, and thanks to the simple USB connection, transferring files is a drag-and-drop operation. The downside? The designers may have thought the oval display a good idea at the time, but it provides an obscured view of track and menu items. However, the sound quality is more than good enough to compensate; it's full-bodied and upfront, perfect for pop and rock.

MEMORY 64Mb (128Mb 'backpack' is extra)
SUPPORTS MP3, WMA
CONNECTION USB
www.riohome.com



SAMSUNG YEPP NEW D (JAZZ)

£219 ★★★★★

PROS Easy to use; great organiser
CONS Takes a while to set up

Unlike the classical if sombre Rio 800, this latest Samsung Yepp is from the love-or-loathe school of industrial design. Depending on your taste, it is either an lovingly fashioned exercise in miniature design or a nasty, button-strewn rectangle of plastic. The jury's out, but we'll reassure you with a simple observation – this is the best-sounding player here. And at around £219 retail, it's also remarkable value. Sure, it has its eccentricities: the 'remote' is an nightmare ergonomically and the software bundled with our test version was PC-only. Once you've wrestled with its oddities, the New D rewards with a smooth performance that suffers none of the brittleness found in the Iomega or Rio. The Yepp gets our vote, but then we never did have any taste in industrial design.

MEMORY 64Mb
SUPPORTS MP3
CONNECTION USB
www.samsung.com

WORDS: MARK PAYTON; PICTURES: NICK WRIGHT

DIAMOND RIO VOLT £149 ★★★★☆

PROS Plays CD-Rs, allowing 20 hours of music; cheap and simple to get started
CONS Bulky and a tad unattractive

OK, so it doesn't quite fit the profile of the other MP3 portables in this test – largely because it is actually a CD personal. But the Volt earns its place by virtue of its topicality (it has only just gone on sale over here) and its potential usefulness. Because unlike other CD personals on the market, the Volt will play CD-Rs full of MP3/WMA files. Think on that one for a moment: using the WMA format, you can fit over 20 hours of music onto a single disc (now think back to the 70 or so minutes offered by your pre-recorded CDs). Even better, the Volt's internal software appears to make light work of filtering through dozens of tracks once you've loaded your CD-R. We could criticise the styling and build (*Blake's Seven* purple and silver rendered in finest plastic), but that would be missing the point – the Volt sounds good, performs its difficult task extremely well, and is remarkably cheap. If you burn music files, this is well worth considering.

MEMORY n/a
SUPPORTS MP3, WMA
CONNECTION n/a
www.riohome.com

IOMEGA HIPZIP £203 ★★★★☆

PROS Handsome styling; sturdy; easy to master; exciting sound
CONS Tricky headphones

With the arrival of the Rio 800 on the scene, Iomega has decided to slash the HipZip's price to just over £200. Which, given that this includes two 40Mb PocketZip disks, makes the baby player a steal. Forget the fact that it has no internal memory; you may be reliant on the mini disks for storage, but they're cheap (£35 for a pack of four) and easy to carry around. And once you've gone through the straightforward set-up process (a USB connection to your PC or Mac, which talks to the bundled MusicMatch Jukebox/Windows Media Player 7 software), transferring files is a simple matter of copying. The results? An upbeat, exciting sound that, while bright, doesn't bring the hard-edged sibilance of the Rio. Add to that its good looks and reassuringly chunky build, and we'd be very happy with a HipZip. We just wish they'd opt for banded headphones in place of the straggling strings currently supplied.

MEMORY 40Mb (via PocketZip disk)
SUPPORTS MP3, WMA
CONNECTION USB
www.iomega.com/europe

THOMSON LYRA PD2211 £229

★★★★☆

PROS Comes with an FM radio built-in; smooth sound performance
CONS Takes a while to master

Entering the thick of the fray, Thomson's all-new Lyra brings with it a distinctive approach to styling that arguably lacks the hi-tech edge of, say, the Network Walkman or Rio 800. But then the new 64Mb Thomson, powered by two AA batteries, offers an extra that's unique in this company – an FM radio. Of course, you may say that's irrelevant here, but it does improve the unit's value rating considerably. Our test Thomson was an early unit, complete with decidedly dickey bundled software. But after poking and prompting, we managed to transfer a few MP3 and WMA files from the office PC via USB to the Lyra's compact flash card. And lo and behold, the Lyra returned great results – like the Samsung Yepp, the emphasis is on smooth tune-playing rather than instant crash bang, but then that's not necessarily a bad thing. The shame is that the FM radio, at least on this showing, is at best second rate. Still, that doesn't stop the Lyra from being one to shortlist.

MEMORY 64Mb
SUPPORTS MP3, WMA, G2
CONNECTION USB
www.thomson-lyra.com

SONY NETWORK WALKMAN (NW-E5) £300 ★★★★☆

PROS Amazing sound; attractive; 96Mb memory
CONS Only compatible with PCs

Before we begin, we should include the warning that our test sample of the NW-E5 was a very early unit indeed (complete with a plea from Sony that it should not be subject to a full review). Still, that won't stop us from singing the player's praises – it has already sold out in Japan, and it's not hard to see why. Such terms may be cloying, but the Sony is genuinely adorable – both in dimensions and detail. It's also practical, in having 96Mb of memory on tap. There is, of course, a twist in the tail: at its heart, the NW uses ATRAC3 compression, the same as is used in MiniDisc. The result? A full-bodied, rich sound with real punch to the bass. The catch? It is supplied with only PC software; if you're a Mac junkie, forget it (that said, the Open MGJukebox software supplied, which converts your MP3s or CD tracks into ATRAC3 files, is more than serviceable). A classic in the making.

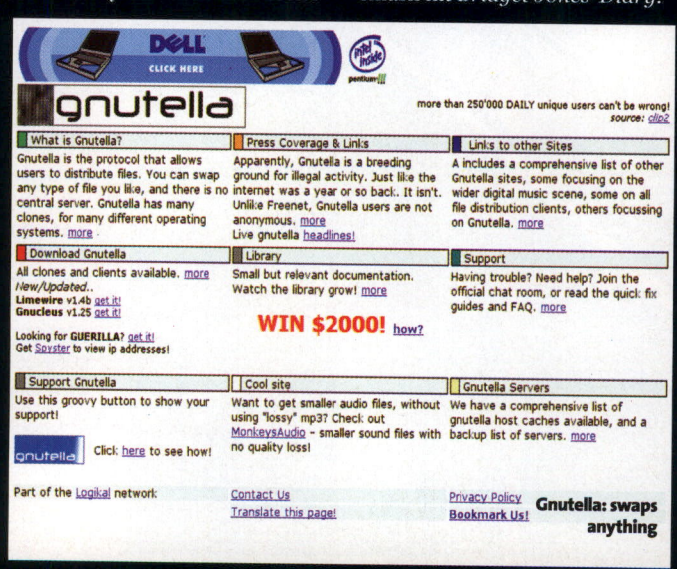
MEMORY 96Mb
SUPPORTS All formats via ATRAC3
CONNECTION USB
www.sony.com

Traffic took almost £100m at the box office. Yet thousands of film fans saw Catherine Zeta Jones' hit on the Web without paying a penny. And she's not the only big-name victim...

IN MARCH THIS YEAR, FBI agents swooped on the Washington State home of 34-year old Jillann Reeves and arrested her for placing over 140 pirated movies and 2000 pirated video games on her Web site, Koolreds.com. Among the films were major pictures such as *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* and *Toy Story 2*, and others which had not even been released on video. Reeves could now face five years in prison and a $250,000 fine for criminal copyright violations.

The raid was just the latest in a series of measures by the US film industry to stamp out movie piracy on the Internet. The unconscionably impatient or those with a philosophical aversion to copyright laws no longer need to trudge down to Honest John's market stall to get their hands on the latest black-market blockbusters, they just have to log on. Needless to say, Hollywood has been swift to pick up on the high concept: it has all the makings of a great courtroom drama. If it was just a question of shutting down the odd site offering hooky flicks then the moguls would sleep soundly, but according to a spokesman for the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) the Net is becoming a 'cyber-fleamarket', and the arrival of sophisticated file sharing networks could mean there's very little that the MPAA or anyone else can do about it.

Anyone reasonably adept at searching both the Web and file sharing networks will be able to turn up a wealth of big-name films ready for download on a variety of sites, from *American Beauty* and *The Beach* to the recently-released Catherine Zeta Jones vehicle *Traffic* and the smash hit *Bridget Jones' Diary*.


DELL
CLICK HERE
gnutella
more than 250'000 DAILY unique users can't be wrong!
source: clip2
What is Gnutella?
Gnutella is the protocol that allows users to distribute files. You can swap any type of file you like, and there is no central server. Gnutella has many clones, for many different operating systems. more
Press Coverage & Links
Apparently, Gnutella is a breeding ground for illegal activity. Just like the internet was a year or so back.. It isn't. Unlike Freenet, Gnutella users are not anonymous. more
Live gnutella headlines!
Links to other Sites
A includes a comprehensive list of other Gnutella sites, some focusing on the wider digital music scene, some on all file distribution clients, others focussing on Gnutella. more
Download Gnutella
All clones and clients available. more
New/Updated..
Limewire v1.4b get it!
Gnucleus v1.25 get it!
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Library
Small but relevant documentation. Watch the library grow! more
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Cool site
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Gnutella Servers
We have a comprehensive list of gnutella host caches available, and a backup list of servers. more
Part of the Logikal network
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Gnutella: swaps anything

So how did we get to such a state of affairs? Early last year, while music piracy was dominating the headlines, developer Justin Frankel was putting the finishing touches to a new technology that would make Napster yesterday's news. On the morning of 14 March, a message on hacker site Slashdot announced that Frankel's company Nullsoft had released the code of a file sharing application called Gnutella.

The very next day, Nullsoft's parent company AOL decisively stepped in and killed Gnutella distribution, but it was too late. In a little more than 24 hours, people all over the world had downloaded thousands of copies of the code, and eager programmers went to work. To many, Gnutella was just a Napster clone, but if anyone in the movie industry looked closely enough they must have felt a cold shudder. Whereas Napster only supported music files, Gnutella allowed users to exchange any files, video included. What's more, Gnutella »

WORDS: CHRIS HADLEY; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

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* Internet Magazine December 2000 Top 30 ISP survey. Results based on Internet Magazine employees responses on overall quality of Installation, Performance, Value for Money and Technical Support.

needed no Web site and no central server (see How It Works, right) – if millions of Internet users did start swapping pirate movies, who could the lawyers go to work on... all of them?

So is file sharing really a threat to the future of the big studios? Among the various programs which allow you to link to the Gnutella network (***www.gnutella.co.uk***), LimeWire is widely held to be the most advanced and easiest to use. If you baulk at the 5.6Mb download remember that any movies you find are likely to be at least ten times that size, and perhaps there's the rub. Pirate movies are out there all right: searches for *Bridget Jones* or *Traffic* both yield numerous hits within seconds, but just part of either film weighs in at a hefty 600Mb. You need at least a cable connection and preferably a T1 line if you really can't wait for the DVD to arrive in the shops.

American Beauty: downloadable

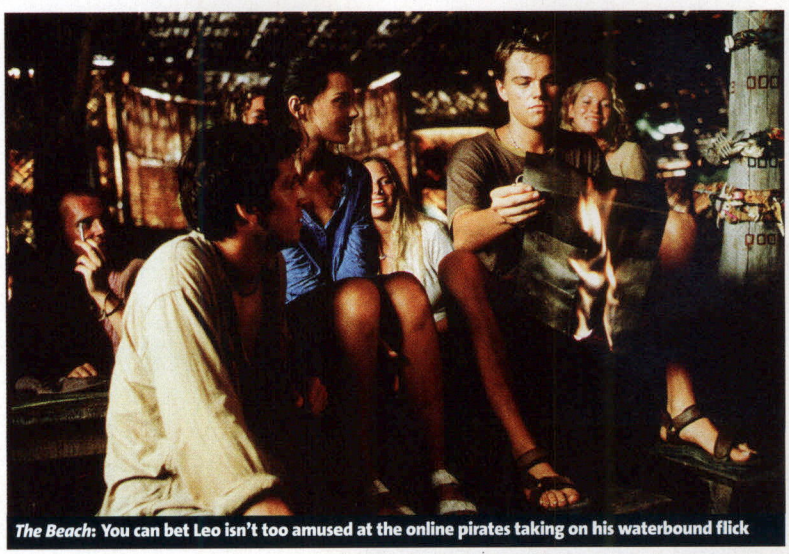
But whether the movie industry is really under threat or not, it's certainly doing a good impression of big business fighting for its life, or at least its profits. In July last year, the MPAA launched its first major action against a file sharing service, Scour.com, which was caught with its hand in the cookie jar when its central server turned out to contain some very famous films. The MPAA was furious, describing Scour as no better than shoplifters: 'File sharing is a serious misnomer,' says a spokesperson for the MPAA. 'If I share a piece of cake with you, we're each doing with a little less, because I have half a piece and you have half a piece. Under the Napster/Scour.com version of sharing, I can give you and others two pieces, four pieces, eight pieces, 16 pieces and still have as much as I want. This is stealing. Period.' The courts took a similar view; Scour filed for bankruptcy in October and is now under new ownership with a legitimate look.

File sharing alone will not bring Hollywood to its knees, because to distribute films over the Internet you need to hack the movies. Enter DeCSS, a well-known hacking utility which started to appear on the Internet two years ago and allows movie buffs to decrypt standard DVD encryption. This wasn't shoplifting, this was house-breaking. The MPAA sued legendary hacker site 2600 (***www.2600.com***) and several others for providing links to the code. In January this year, a New York District Judge found in favour of the movie industry, but the case is back in the appeals court.

Unlike pirate video tapes, which are always notoriously poor quality, digital piracy produces a perfect copy, and the 1000th copy of a copy is just as good. Without Scour and Napster out of the way, handfuls of disappointed fans turned to Gnutella and despite its current limitations the network now has 250,000 unique users each day. The MPAA wasn't going to sit around: unable to attack a unique organisation, in April lawyers sent letters to hundreds of ISPs warning them their members were violating copyright law. Excite@Home was the first to respond, giving infringers 24 hours to cease activities. It's a weak tactic, but Gnutella users aren't anonymous and ultimately the industry could make an example of a few individuals to scare off the rest.

Web piracy produces a perfect picture

But Gnutella isn't alone, just the most prominent. In the months since the end of the Napster free-for-all, file sharing programmes have blossomed. Unique among them, and probably of most long-term concern to the movie industry is Freenet, otherwise known as the 'Indestructible Napster.' Developed in mid-1999 by Ian Clarke, then a student at Edinburgh University, Freenet is still in development. Unlike Gnutella, users are anonymous. Files on the network constantly migrate from computer to computer, making it nigh on impossible to track down an individual file, and even if a file is tracked to an individual computer, there's no way to tell if it actually originated there. Once up and running the guardians of copyright are really going to have their work cut out to close it down. Clarke, the poster-boy of file sharing, makes no bones about it: 'Freenet attempts to permit true freedom of speech,' he says. 'Copyright law attempts to prevent communication in some circumstances. And therefore, in order for Freenet to do its job successfully, it must prevent enforcement of copyright law.'

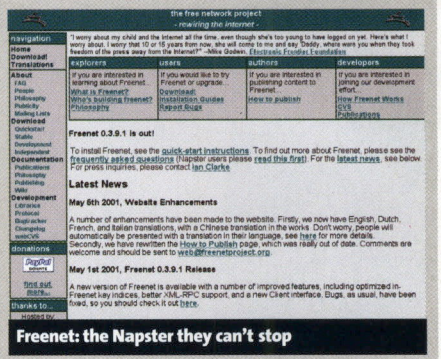


***The Beach*: You can bet Leo isn't too amused at the online pirates taking on his waterbound flick**

FILE SHARING EXPLAINED

HOW IT WORKS»

Technically known as peer-to-peer networks or just P2P, the new generation of file sharing technologies such as Gnutella and Freenet (***freenet.sourceforge.net***) allow individual users to exchange files without going through a traditional server. The files are stored in a folder on the user's computer and, when they connect to the Gnutella network using one of the many interfaces such as LimeWire, other users can search the contents of that folder and then download or upload files. The network constantly changes as different computers go on- and offline, but typically an individual computer connects directly to four others, each of which connects to four others so the network grows exponentially. However, the network is only as good as the computers and modems connected to it, and bottlenecks soon build up as slow machines become overloaded with search requests; and of course, files on a computer are only available while it's connected.



Freenet: the Napster they can't stop

The Freenet model is slightly more complex, and claims to overcome the drawbacks of Gnutella by constantly moving files around the system and closer to the computers which frequently request that type of file.In this way it's far more difficult to track both the origins and destinations of files.

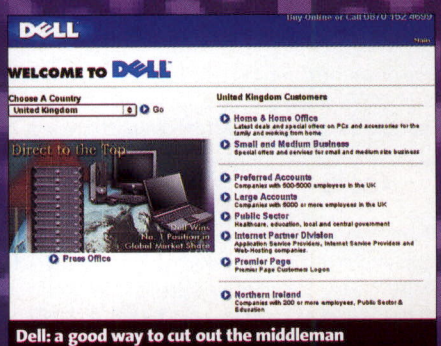
WORDS: SHAUN MARIN

How to get the latest kit for less

Ditching the high street for the Web could be the smartest move you make when it comes to buying computers and peripherals. We test the stores that promise savings...

It's no surprise that you can buy computer products online. At the moment the Internet is umbilically linked to computers; most of us still access the Net via one, and will continue to do so for some considerable time. But what is surprising is the plethora of people queuing up to sell you something, and the range of products on offer. From entire PCs and peripherals to programs you download and use instantly, it's all for sale online.

If you're the conservative type, you can buy complete PCs from well-known high street stores such as Comet and PC Warehouse. Names you know and trust, but from who you're unlikely to get anything cheaper than their already pretty expensive high street outlets. A better bet is to miss the middleman out altogether and buy direct from manufacturers such as Dell (***www.dell.co.uk***) and Gateway (***www.gwzk.co.uk***). These big-name brands have impressive online stores, where you can not only pick up a bargain or two, but also completely configure the computer you buy.



Dell: a good way to cut out the middleman

It's simple to do, and just involves you selecting options for categories such as »

monitor size, amount of hard drive space and what type of software comes bundled with your computer. A word of warning, though: while the 'from' prices are very enticing, it's very easy to add hundreds onto that price with the odd £60 for a CD-R rather than a DVD-ROM drive and £90 for a 17-inch monitor rather than a 15-inch job. Also, make sure you know whether VAT is included in the initial price or not, as you could end up with a nasty shock at the checkout. And while you can always go back and change some options, don't forget you're paying for your time online. It's still a simple and pretty cost-effective way of shopping for a computer system.

At the other end of the scale, you can also buy software from sites such as Softbynet (***www.softbynet.com***) where you just pay for the software you want and download it straight to your computer. There's no packaging or physical manuals – you can download them – so it's good for the environment too.

Gateway: systems straight from the manufacturer

Just pay for the software you want and download it

In between these two extremes are peripherals. Whether it's a new monitor, high-powered graphics card, some extra RAM or a new CD-RW disc drive, the Internet is the place to shop for computer products. The reason it's so good is twofold; firstly, prices online can considerably undercut buying in the high street and secondly, even the largest warehouse computer stores only hold a small percentage of the hundreds of thousands of different computer-related products available, and while no one Web site will stock them all either, you're only a click away from one that does.

As with most things online, buying computer products is an international affair, and you can order from all over the world, often saving some money in the process. But unlike buying DVDs from the States, you are much, much more likely to get hit with heavy import duties that will eat into your savings, and don't forget about the carriage costs, especially if the product is something seriously heavy like a new monitor.

There are more than enough UK-based sites to mean competition is fierce, and therefore lead to increased saving. We've concentrated on UK sites here, and it's probably best that you do, too.

We found that computer shopping sites vary in much more than price. Some are very professional, with lots of information on the products, and even extra features such as buying guides, while others are pretty much just long lists of products which are obviously designed for serious computer users who know exactly what they're looking for.

We'd obviously only recommend that you shop from a site that offers a secure payment option, but also check the returns policy. Buying computer products is a lot more complicated than buying the latest Britney Spears CD online. When spending £100 on a hard drive there's always the chance it's not going to work with your computer, even though it's not faulty. So check that the site allows you to return non-faulty goods, and check whether you have to pay for the privilege if you do. Most of them retain the option to charge you

WHERE TO BUY YOUR HARDWARE

	NAME	PRICE	POSTAGE	TOTAL	DELIVERY (p)	DELIVERY (a)	RETURN
	ACTION	£152.74	£5.45	£158.19	3 days	2 days	£20 handling charge

www.action.com
Helpfully, this site tells you exactly how many of your purchase are in stock: when we ordered there were 54, so dispatch was rapid. Though far from the cheapest we found, the site does have lots of interesting licensed content. There's a minimum handling fee of £20 for non-faulty returns, and you've only got 14 days to send it back, either by a courier or through the post.

	BUY.COM	£128.01	Free	£128.01	1 day	1 day	Postage cost

TOP SITE

www.buy.com
Fittingly for a site with such a brilliant e-commerce URL, Buy.com does the business. It's not only the cheapest site here, but it has an excellent range of products and the best returns policy for non-faulty goods. If you change your mind within 14 days all you pay is the postage to return the goods, which seems reasonable.

	DABS DIRECT	£135.12	Free	£135.12	2-6 days	3 days	Up to 25 percent handling charge

www.dabs.com
Dabs is a great example of a company moving with the times. Once a major mail order computer retailer, it's moved online with aplomb. It sells a massive range of products at very reasonable prices – helped by the free delivery service. There's a possible 25 percent levy on non-faulty returns.

	INSIGHT	£146.86	£9.95	£156.81	1 day	1 day	20 percent restocking fee

www.insight.com
This site is part of a large American company, and boasts a range of over 50,000 products, so it's fortunate that its search engine is efficient enough to get you want you want quickly. Still, it's quite techie in nature, and not for the newcomer. Prices are reasonable, but the next day delivery service ups the cost by another £9.95.

	JUNGLE	£139.83	£3.99	£143.82	1 day	1 day	Postage not refundable

www.jungle.com
Jungle proves you can get away with a non-relevant URL and still produce a great site. Reasonably priced and with a workable returns policy (seven days for unwanted goods and only the possibility of a charge for carriage), this is a pretty solid bet for your computing needs – especially as you can pick up a couple of CDs as well while you're there...

DELIVERY (p) = promised; **DELIVERY** (a) = actual; **(RETURN)** = cost of returning non-faulty goods

a handling charge of up to 20 percent of the purchase price, although in this test we found that most of the sites were open to negotiation on this matter, and if you're buying a popular product they usually just bill you for carriage. If you're buying software you're unlikely to be able to return it if you've opened the packaging, but faulty goods were always exchangeable at no cost.

We set out to buy an Iomega Zip 250 USB drive from a range of shops. This lovely piece of kit is fast making the old floppy disk redundant, as it's not too expensive and instead of a mere 1.4Mb storage capacity can store up to 250Mb of data. In a high street shop you can expect to pay £150 or more for one of these devices, but online there are significant savings to be made.

We managed to pick one up at the impressive Buy.com (***www.buy.com***) online store for a pinch over £128, which included free delivery one day after ordering. A similar price was to be had at Watford (***www.watford.co.uk***) which also delivered in its promised time scale, but this was four to six days – no good if you're in a rush.

Refreshingly, there were no real disappointments at all in this bunch. Perhaps online shopping is finally getting its act together across the board, and soon we won't need to darken the doorsteps of high street shops ever again...

	NAME	PRICE	POSTAGE	TOTAL	DELIVERY (p)	DELIVERY
	MICROWAREHOUSE	£140.99	£5.81	£146.80	1 day	1 day	15 percent or £20 restocking fee

www.microwarehouse.co.uk

There's no shortage of product at this well-stocked site. The majority of goods also have detailed descriptions and the odd picture to smooth the concerns of newcomers to PC buying. The returns policy is about average for this group, with a charge of 15 percent or £20 for non-faulty goods, whichever is the greater.

	PC WORLD	£149.99	£3.25	£153.24	Out of stock	Out of stock	Postage costs

www.pcworld.co.uk

Bad news for PC World. At the time of writing the high street favourite's Web site was out of stock of the Zip drive we wanted. If it was in stock, it would have been pretty expensive, although if you change your mind within 14 days you can just pop the item back to one of its branches, and get a full refund minus the original cost of package and posting.

	TECHNO WORLD	£140.71	£5.86	£146.57	1-2 days	2 days	15 percent or £20 restocking fee

www.technoworld.com

A decent site with a good range of products. Prices are reasonable and delivery prompt. Be careful, though: if you change your mind or your new hard drive is incompatible with your computer you will be changed a 're-stocking' charge of either £20 or 15 percent of the price, whichever is the greater.

	WATFORD	£128.08	Free	£128.08	4-6 days	4 days	Up to 25 percent handling charge

www.watford.co.uk

This site may sound like the home of a First Division football club, but it's actually an impressive computer warehouse, for thousands of products detailed and described comprehensively. It's also close to the cheapest we found, although delivery times were pretty long, and the possible 25 percent handling charge on unwanted returns is a bit steep.

	WSTORE	£145.63	£7.05	£152.68	2 days	1 day	Pay for return postage

www.wstore.co.uk

A Europe-wide store with 18,000 products in stock. There is decent levels of information about most products, and the site is easy to navigate and search. Postage prices put this among the most expensive here, but the returns policy is pretty fair – they can add a 'reasonable' handling charge, but didn't when we haggled.

BLAZE PC X-CHANGER £40

Every gamer's dream come true – the X-Changer lets you download saved games and cheats from the Web and save them directly to your PlayStation, Game Boy or N64. All you need is a PC to plug it into. ***www.blaze-gear.com***

SKOOTBOARD £140

Still whizzing around on your boring old scooter? Get with the times and get a skootboard, which combines the best bits of a BMX and a skateboard for more tricks and manoeuvreability. Buy it from ***www.dmrbikes.com***

Retailtherapy»

:// Food and drink on the move, the alternative scooter and friendly mice...

PORTABLE OUTBACK WEEKENDER £39.99

Carting a full-blown barbecue around has always been a thankless chore. Help is at hand, then, with this lightweight, affordable grill from ***www.thebbq.co.uk***. Combine with the Mini Cooler (right) for maximum effect.

NICKEL SKINCARE FOR MEN FROM £13.95

Too timid to queue for moisturiser? Avoid the embarassment by picking from a range including massage oils, lotions and shaving gel at ***www.mankindonline.co.uk***; all products come with free delivery.

TOP BUY

EFX MINI COOLER £110

Summer's here, so keep your food and drink cool on the move with this stylish and suprisingly roomy portable fridge from ***www.efx.co.uk***, which is light enough to carry on picnics and car trips.

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK WRIGHT

EPSON DIGICAM £680

Hate waiting for your photos to develop? This state-of-the-art digital camera from ***www.epson.co.uk*** gives digital clarity prints to download to your PC and print out or save for sending by email.

EASY SURFACE PREP £14.95

Spend less time on your DIY with this nifty little can – one litre is enough to prepare surfaces for eight litres of paint. Only available at ***www.giftinspiration.com.*** Free delivery in five working days.

KIDDY MOUSE £14.99

Now the kids can surf with ease thanks to this mouse designed with smaller hands in mind. Pick it up or peruse the range of novelty mice on offer at ***www.pc-mouse.co.uk***. Free delivery in seven working days.

BOULES SET £17.95

One of the more welcome exports from across the channel, this boules set from ***www.giftinspiration.com*** is perfect for lazy summer evenings. Free delivery in five working days. You do need gravel, though...

SIMPLE GUIDELINES FOR PAINLESS ONLINE PURCHASING

TOP TIPS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING>>

CHECK THAT THE SITE IS SECURE

A small padlock will appear in the bottom left of your browser to show that you can safely send credit card details through the site. Your Web browser will also tell you whether a site is secure or not when you enter it.

SHOP WITH BRAND-NAME COMPANIES

As with shopping in the real world, you're better off with a company you've actually heard of – and these days, most big name brands own their Web addresses (so you can be sure that ***www.marksandspencer.com*** is, in fact, M&S).

PRINT THE CONTRACT

This is the only permanent record of your purchase, so make sure you keep it, along with your order number, billing address and other details. And here's a fact to put your mind at rest: if it's a UK site, you have the same consumer rights as you do in the high street.

NEVER SEND ANYTHING BY EMAIL

Don't send card details by email – it can be intercepted.

CHECK DELIVERY TIMES AND CHARGES

Companies should tell you the delivery charge, if there is one, on their site. If you're in the Highlands and Islands or Ireland, you may find free delivery doesn't apply.

IF IT GOES WRONG, DON'T WORRY

Contrary to scare stories, online shopping is safer and very often cheaper than traditional methods – and it's in the store's interest to sort out problems quickly.

dedicated servers

A Commitment to Success

- Service Level Agreement
- State of the Art Data Centre
- Same Day Setup
- No Capital Outlay

Are you outgrowing virtual hosting? Running into extra costs for high bandwidth use, more domains and email? Does the server itself seem slow and inflexible? Does your web designer keep saying there are so many things you could be doing if only you had more speed and space, and access to the 'workings' of the server? Your accountant won't let you spend a fortune on leased lines and computers. Maybe you don't have the technical staff to run your own network anyway. Well, you have no choice but to put up with virtual hosting, right?

Wrong. The serious solution to web hosting is a dedicated server, and it's within your reach now. You can benefit from high value Service Level Agreements just like the biggest players in your industry. You can enjoy the speed and flexibility of your own server in one of the country's leading Data Centres. You can even choose a server that's as technically simple to operate as virtual hosting, but without the restrictions. Your web designer will be happy.

So will your accountant, because dedicated servers cost less than you think. In fact, they can even work out cheaper than your existing virtual hosting arrangements. You get all the flexibility, all the control, all the speed and room for growth, and all at NO CAPITAL COST. Interested? Call us now.

Additional services such as co-location, system monitoring, firewalls, security services, system backups, managed system administration also available, contact us for details.

LINUX SERVERS

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from £99.99 to £449.99 per month

WINDOWS SERVERS

Ideal for MSCP's, MCSE's, Visual Basic programmers, projects that require Active Server Pages, SQL or office components. Windows 2000 or NT installed & configured. DNS, IIS and MS Frontpage Server Extensions included as standard.

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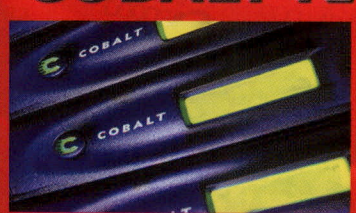
£99.99 per month FREE SETUP

COBALT RAQ SERVERS



The high end "web-in-a-box" solution. Easy to use, no jargon or systems know-how required. Ideal for web designers, resellers, entrepreneurs etc. Add virtual servers, configure e-mail addresses, activate autoresponders over the Internet all in real time.

from £99.99 to £199.99 per month

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WHAT WEBSITE?

The Best of the Web

@ CHANNELS://

MUSIC 56
Napster is dead – long live sites showcasing the best in unsigned bands

MOVIES 60
Fancy making it in Hollywood? The Net can help you turn movie mogul

TRAVEL 62
Make your holiday decisions at the last minute with the Web's guidance

SPORT 64
Take your leisure time a little bit further with our pick of adventure sport sites

HEALTH 66
Trying to kick the habit? From smoking to snacking, the cure's online

MONEY 70
Keep a tighter rein on your purse strings by budgeting on the Web

SOCIETY 72
Planning to get hitched? Take the hassle out of preparing for the big day

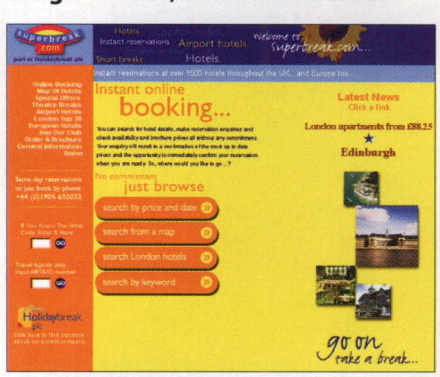
LEARNING 76
Brush up your PC skills, whether you're a beginner or a budding IT professional

THE DIRECTORY 78
Looking for the best sites? Don't waste time searching – just check out our list of addresses

PICTURES: STOCKFILE/STEVEN BEHR

SPORT Spend the summer living life on the edge – on sea, on land or in the air

MUSIC Get that record deal in the bag



TRAVEL Get away at the last minute

FOCUS:// Unsigned bands

The next big thing

With Napster no longer a force, unsigned bands are the new MP3 kings. Here's where to find them...

VITAMINIC

www.vitaminic.co.uk ★★★★

If a visit to Vitaminic seems oddly familiar, the chances are you've already been to Mp3.com – this rival to Peoplesound, which has been established almost as long, bears more than a passing resemblance to the American giant, and the comparisons don't stop at the cosmetic. With over 150 genres, Vitaminic is a broad church, neatly encompassing everything from power pop to polka under one roof: accompanying gig guides and compilation CDs give a strong community feel, and the MP3 guide is as good a general introduction to the subject as you'll find. And, even though you have to pay for certain downloads from the better artists, you'll be stung for no more than 70 pence a time.

POPWIRE

www.popwire.com ★★★★

There's no questioning Popwire's credentials in the unsigned band field, claiming to have brokered 26 record deals for artists featured on the site (although closer inspection reveals that 10 of those were for the same band). Neither is Popwire unambitious – spin-offs so far include an online mag, radio station and TV channel showcasing the best acts. There's no huge wealth of talent to choose from here, but what there is is well-presented and available to stream or download at will, and is quality-controlled by the presence of charts voted for by users. Neat, tidy and a lot of fun.

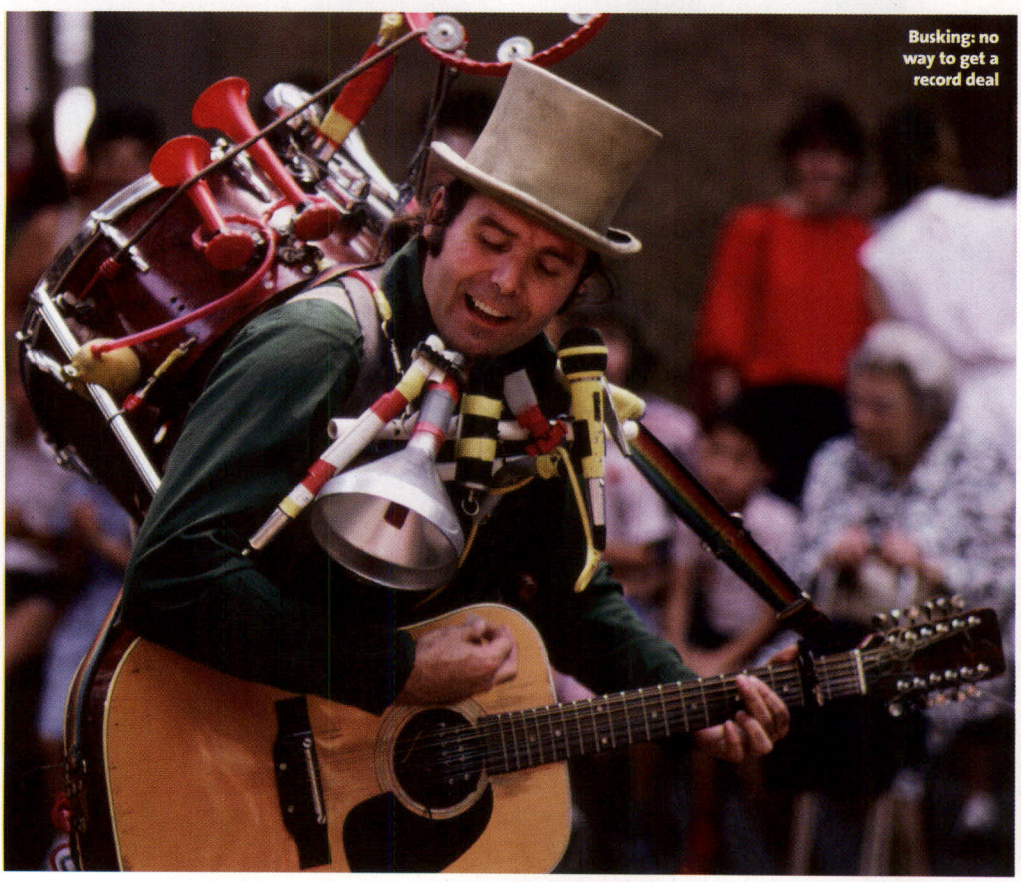
@ If you have to bookmark one...

GARAGEBAND

www.garageband.com ★★★★★

The legal arguments are still being played out in the Napster case, but only the wildly optimistic would hope to see any more free music from Shawn Fanning's servers. From now on, the choice is stark: pay for officially-sanctioned tracks on record company-run download sites, or explore the wealth of unsigned talent currently residing online. Deal-seeking bands were all the rage when MP3 was first a hi-tech buzzword, before surfers began to realise the same technology could be equally applied to their CD collections. Garageband is a relative newcomer to the unsigned scene, but has quickly assumed pole position with its comprehensive and eminently useable site: every imaginable genre is supplanted by hundreds of downloadable artists, and the quality isn't bad (they're all ultimately working towards a $250,000 recording contract, determined by the quality of reviews they attract). Moreover, Garageband uses an 'advisory panel' of 30 top producers, including Sir George Martin and Brian Eno, to judge tracks and pass on advice: judges also contribute to the 'Musicians' section, which includes a wealth of tips for the aspiring superstar. Ultimately, though, it's the music that counts, and in terms of both quality and quantity this site beats the opposition hands down. If you're desperate to find the next Gallaghers on the Web, or if you're just looking for quality music for free, your chances of success are greater at Garageband.

Garageband: home of the next Gallaghers?


Busking: no way to get a record deal

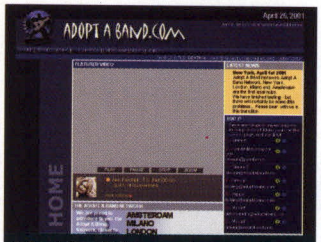
Popwire: branching into television

ADOPTABAND.COM

www.adoptaband.com ★★★★

Here's a novel idea – instead of simply listening to unsigned talent for free, why not actively support it with your own hard-earned cash? That's the premise behind Adoptaband, where a carefully-vetted selection of young chancers are placed at your disposal. If you like the look (and indeed sound) of them, pledge a cash amount to them, which they can use for equipment, publicity and gigging. There's evidence here to suggest people are actually participating, despite the fact you're not guaranteed any return on your investment (it'd be nice if your £50 donation was at least refunded on receipt of a £1 million recording contract, but don't count on it...) Full marks, too, for the FAQ section, which reads 'Q: How do

WORDS: ROBERT JEFFERY; GARY PARKINSON ; PICTURES: ANGELA LUBRANO/LIVE PHOTOGRAPHY



Adoptaband: they want your cash

you make money?' 'A: We don't. We just hope that we won't go broke.' Now if only some bigger dot coms had been so honest...

GETOUTTHERE

getoutthere.bt.com ★★★

Only the very best make it to BT's musical table: this all-encompassing, Flash-strewn talent portal doesn't boast the huge database of unsigned talent of, say, MP3.com, but it does make a great play of selecting the finest sounds in various genres for your musical delight. With a panel of regular celebrity judges including Carl Cox and an updated chart of the most popular tracks, you can be assured you won't be mistaking the next Oasis for the latest Shed Seven. Getoutthere has branched out into writing, film and photography over the past year, but music – and in particular dance and club sounds – remains its speciality.

BE SONIC

www.besonic.com ★★★★

Besonic takes a slightly different approach to the whole unsigned MP3 question – instead of simply pitching up and helping yourself to lashings of free music, you're encouraged to participate by signing up and registering yourself as a reviewer, creating yourself a profile and home page in the process before wading in with your thoughts on acts from every genre under the sun. You can even store your MP3s in your own personal 'locker' on the site. As a result, the reviews tend to be more numerous, not to say informed, than on other sites, although there remain some question marks over exactly who's writing them – when we visited, one young singer-songwriter's works were being given the once-over by her own record company...

PEOPLESOUND

www.peoplesound.com ★★★★

Indisputably the best-known and most reliable UK-specific MP3 site, Peoplesound has been plugging away since the early days of MP3, offering a steady diet of select acts, mainly in the rock and dance fields. A series of gigs plus free CDs for all site visitors help to overcome the 'they're-not-signed-so-why-should-I-listen-to-them?' factor, which is a »

LINKS ;-) LYRIC DATABASES

Can't find the words to sing

The hauntingly familiar phrase that dances on the tongue but can't be spat out; the half-heard words that rise and fall in a memorable melody. Such hooks are the lifeblood of the music industry and until recent times all a person could do was wander about half-mumbling, half-singing them until the song was heard again or better yet the record was bought. Then came the Net.

As in so many other spheres of life, the Net has all the answers to lyric queries; the main problem is where (and how) to find them. Luckily for the cloth-eared, there are a number of lyric servers to help out when you're lost for words. And it happens a lot: in any music-loving office lyrics are questioned, and *the net* HQ is no exception.

It'll stop you going 'dum-de-doo' in the chorus...

If you've caught a phrase on the radio or in a club and want to know where it's from, the first and perhaps most obvious place to search is Google (***www.google.com***). Bung the words you've heard in quotes and try it out – if the track (or artist) is popular enough, you might come up trumps. We did with 'Give Him a Great Big Kiss', which turned out to be a Shangri-Las number. That settled an argument. If you get duff results, try slightly altering the wording – you may have misheard (it happens; see ***www.kissthisguy.com***) – or cutting the quote down to a half-sentence soundbite.

Should Google (or any other search engine) not suffice, there is an increasing number of lyric engines popping up, and it's a hotly-contested area. As an example, Sing365's (***www.sing365.com***) self-description as the 'global leader of lyric search engine' is ungrammatical but trademarked. Like many a lyric engine, Sing365 (not affiliated to Football365 and so on) lets you search by artist, album or song title but not lyric, which renders the phrase 'lyric search engine' something of a misnomer. That said, it does help you fill in the gaps in your knowledge once you know the artist or title, which'll stop you going 'dum de doo' during the third line of the chorus.

All the lyric search engines have their own foibles. Chart Lyrics (***www.chart-lyrics.com***) will generally produce the lyrics you desire, though often cOnfusinglY CapitaliSED; Get Lyrics (***www.getlyrics.com***) has an irksome search engine which is best bypassed in favour of the A to Z. Our best results came from Lyrics Robot (***www.lyricsrobot.com***), which boasts 300,000 songs from 10,000 artists, but there's not a lot to choose between several of the lyric engines on Yahoo!.

In case you're wondering, there are indeed copyright issues over the use of lyrics on these sites, but the authors' own desire for Internet immortality often means they put their own lyrics up anyway. This happened recently when Embrace lead singer Danny McNamara was trying to describe on the band's site (***www.embrace.co.uk***) the 'feel' of a new song; finally he simply wrote 'I'll tell you what, why don't I just put the lyrics up?' and fans got a sneak preview.

Of course given the banality of most song lyrics, which are all too often mere assemblages of cliché only utilised because singers look silly when they stand there going 'la-la-la', there's a great chance your input of the hackneyed phrase will turn up all kinds of unexpected results from various home pages, but persist and you'll find your tune. Probably.

Heaton: a regular visitor to Sing365?

CD WOW!
www.cd-wow.co.uk

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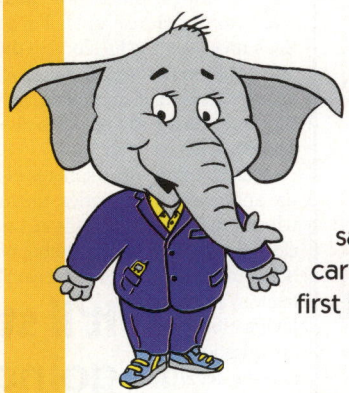
insurance



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www.elephant.co.uk

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FOCUS:// Unsigned bands <cont>

peoplesound
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Pop | Dance | Rock | Indie | Urban | Hip Hop | Classical | Global | New age | Jazz | Blues & Country | Folk | Reggae | Specialist | All genres
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News
Radio
Forums
My Jukebox
Offers
Labels/Music Partners
For Artists
search
LUKEE
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MONC: Virtual Reality Spacesuit
Kitsch 60s tinged indie
Hear it now
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Latest Music News
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other top stories
Destiny's Child top MTV bill 26/04/01 10:48:10
Bo Diddly! 26/04/01 10:41:17
DOT.COM.KID: Rhythm Slave
Hard house hurricane
Hear it now
Hot Discussions
Air rage - the new rock'n'roll?
Grrrr...
TOP 20
Editors Choice
Genre Charts
Latest site Arrivals
Peoplesound: Britain's biggest and best archive of unsigned bands

worthless excuse here: they really are some quality acts to be enjoyed and top marks go to the soundalike service which lets you suggest a well-known artist you enjoy and then matches it with a Peoplesound act. The resulting choices aren't always as accurate as you might hope, but it's by far the most interesting way of discovering new talent on MP3.

IUMA

www.iuma.com ★★★

Napster's loss is most definitely IUMA's gain: as soon as the courts had ruled against Fanning and Co, this beleaguered unsigned artists database was rescued from an uncertain future through a Vitaminic buyout. As a result, the archive of over 25,000 artists which was one of the most well-regarded and useable online is safe and actively seeking new submissions once more – trawl through the hundreds of (often confusing) different genres at your leisure or head straight for the radio section, where you can create your own playlist from your favourite tracks and stream them from your desktop at your leisure.

Create your own playlist to stream online

LIVE CLUB

www.liveclub.co.uk ★★★

Not yet had your fill of thrusting young unsigned talent? Then head over to Live Club, where some of the best untapped acts in the country are ready and waiting for you. The site is as unspectacular as its amateurish design suggests – there are no direct downloads here, but you can peruse a roster running into hundreds of different artists, with direct links to their sites and descriptions of their music. It's all backed up by a gig guide of the artists involved – which pretty much takes all the hard work out of being an A&R man...

MP3.COM

www.mp3.com ★★★★★

The site which started it all. Way back in the heady days of 1997, MP3.com founder Michael Robertson hit on the idea of allowing unsigned acts a portal to showcase their talents to the music-loving public. He spawned a monster: before long, MP3.com was one of the most popular sites around, and remains to this day the largest repository of free MP3s on the Web. As such, quality control isn't of paramount importance, and you'll turn up some hilariously awful bands in among the gems, but for sheer useability and depth it's nigh on impossible to beat. The regularly-updated charts are the most reliable indicator of Web trends: downloads for the more popular bands can run into the hundreds of thousands, and have spawned several notable success stories. A new deal with EMI means big names could soon be rubbing shoulders with the unknowns – watch this space...

@ CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials

BAND SITES

UBL.com
www.ubl.com
Should be your first port of call to use the huge search engine.

Bigmouth
www.bigmouth.co.uk
UK-specific site with many a link.

Wall of Sound
wallofsound.go.com
Links and features from the US.

NEWS AND REVIEWS

RollingStone.com
www.rollingstone.com
The US magazine has pulled out all the stops online.

NME.com
www.nme.com
NME's online version, with a reputation for breaking news.

Q4Music
www.q4music.com
The renowned rock monthly's online arm just gets better.

Spin
www.spin.com
Online version of the edgy US music mag.

GIGS AND TOURS

Aloud.com
www.aloud.com
Top search engine for gigs.

firstcalltickets.com
www.firstcalltickets.com
Tickets for just about everything from gigs to flower shows.

SceneOne
www.sceneone.co.uk
Easy-to-use guide.

Ticketmaster
www.ticketmaster.co.uk
Just about the best.

Way Ahead
www.wayahead.com
Well-priced tickets.

BUYING CDS

secondsounds.com
www.secondsounds.com
Cheap second-hand CDs.

Audiostreet
www.audiostreet.co.uk
With free postage!

Play247
www.play247.com
Cheap chart CDs.

recordstore.co.uk
www.recordstore.co.uk
'*The* home of dance music online'.

MIXING

DJ Sounds
www.djsounds.com
Spin it!

eJay
www.ejay.com
One of the first online mixing portals – and still one of the best.

Scratch It
www.turntable.de
Plenty of fun during long boring afternoons in the office .

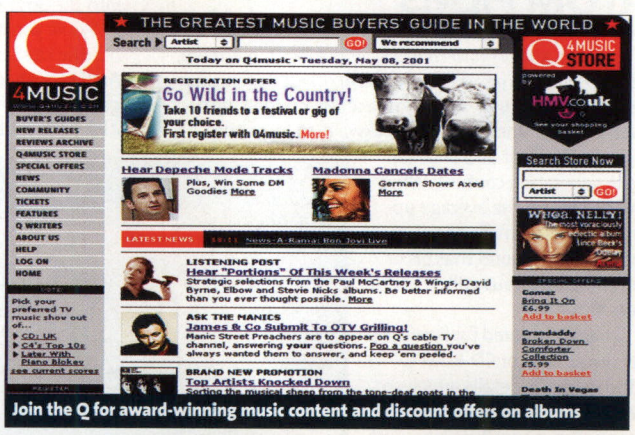
NEWSGROUP

alt.music.lyrics
Ask for further help online.

MAILING LIST

Get a different 'interesting' lyric in your mail each day. Join from ***woozei.dynip.com***.

Spin those platters online at *www.eJay.com*



Join the Q for award-winning music content and discount offers on albums

NEED MORE? **Latest music sites** What's New p16
Useful music addresses The Directory p78

FOCUS:// Make it in the movies

Lights, camera, action

Move over Mr Spielberg: the next generation of filmmakers are doing their thing on the Internet

The Powells' holiday vids were very dull

IN-MOVIES

www.in-movies.co.uk ★★★★

If AtomFilms isn't interested in your short film, or if documentaries are more your bag, it might be worth your while to contact in-movies. Endeavouring to give British short filmmakers the chance to show their wares to a world-wide audience, in-movies accept any fictional or documentary work as long as it's 15 minutes or shorter in length. (If your films tend to have a longer running time, hang on – in-movies believe that 'as the technology improves', it will be able to show longer films.) Should your film get in-movies' nod, it will be sold to TV stations, airlines and other distributors free of charge.

While you're waiting for fame to knock on your door, find inspiration on the in-movies Web site, where film classics such as *Night of the Living Dead* and Coppola's first feature *Dementia 13* are available for viewing. There's also a great new DVD rental service in operation through the site.

THE CYBER FILM SCHOOL

www.cyberfilmschool.com

★★★★★

Short film-making may still be just a distant dream to you, in which case we recommend you visit The Cyber Film School (CFS). Everything you need to know is here. Broken down into six chapters, the CFS Moviemaking Encyclopaedia uses video interviews, demonstrations and assignments to teach users how to produce, direct, write, shoot and edit movies. Those in the biz, such as director Norman Jewison and actor Kevin Spacey, reveal the tricks of their trade, while a link to Amazon provides even more reading material. And all without sitting in a stuffy classroom.

BRITSHORTS

www.britshorts.com ★★★★

For all those who shun the limelight, preferring to create art for art's sake, there's Britshorts, a site that 'drops the Hollywood accent and gives corporate movie chat a miss'. Focusing on British and European mini-films, Britshorts not only wants your scripts and films but also invites aspiring journalists to 'report on what's happening in the industry and most importantly nurture your skills'.

BritShorts: as not seen in Marbella

The content here isn't too extensive; there were only about 40 shorts available to download when we visited. Still, if it's quality over quantity really matters, Britshorts deserves a pat on the back.

EVEO

www.eveo.com ★★★

Only in its second year, Web video company Eveo offers a showcase for the shortest of shorts, or what it calls 'eveos' (remember to 'keep your eveo under four minutes'). The company's primary function is to provide others with the means to make videos for companies wanting to sell themselves online. However, as a sideline, Eveo also offers emerging filmmakers with an opportunity to show their work. In return for Eveo's efforts to promote your film, hopefuls must sign over the 'worldwide non-exclusive right and license' to their creation. It might seem like a lot to ask, but it may prove to be the first step on the ladder to success...

@ If you have to bookmark one...

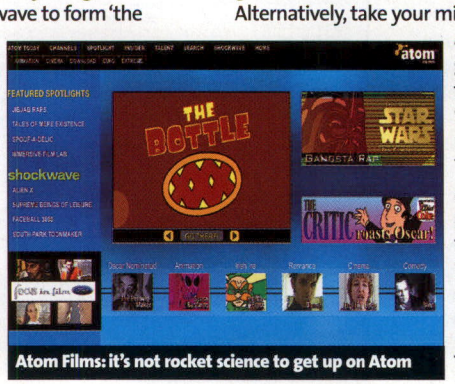
ATOM FILMS

www.atomfilms.com ★★★★★

If you have a short film that you're looking to premiere, you'd be wise to get it onto Atom. Accolade-laden since its inception in 1999, Atom has recently merged with Web entertainment giants Shockwave to form 'the industry's largest audience for next-generation content'. What this means for the average up-and-comer is, simply, an increased likelihood that his or her miniature opus will receive a decent run.

To be considered for licensing, send your VHS or CD-ROM to Atom (specific details are given on the site). Guidelines for entries are short but specific: films must be narrative fiction (documentary filmmakers will have to go elsewhere for their 'big break'), not longer than 20 minutes, completed after 1999, and have all the necessary clearances and rights. Once these are met, pop your baby into the post and pray that someone at Atom rings you.

While you're waiting for that phone to jingle, check out the site's diverse content. There are Daily Picks and Audience Choice downloads to choose from, as well as general animation, cinema, Euro and Extreme channels. Alternatively, take your mind off the waiting by playing any number of Shockwave games, from arcade classics to the art-tastic InkLink. Shockwave-only programming also includes Goth fave Tim Burton's *Stain Boy* series, as well as oddly Pop Art-ish graphic videos for tracks from the likes of Beck and De La Soul. A bit too 'student' for some maybe, but the floating colours and shapes could be just the thing to boost your creative tendencies.



Atom Films: it's not rocket science to get up on Atom

WORDS: JENNIFER KEARNS; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

Eveo: we like (very) short shorts

UNDERGROUNDFILM

www.undergroundfilm.com

★★★★★

If you don't have a competitive nature and are more into sharing than winning, try Undergroundfilm – an independent forum for film and music lovers. You should find a willing recipient for your scripts, shorts or MP3s here. It's free to submit and the rights to your work will remain your own. In return, Undergroundfilm will exhibit your efforts online and may offer additional exposure through other portals and wireless services. And because Undergroundfilm is an open forum, you'll have a better chance getting your work online here than through some of the other sites mentioned.

MOVIEMAKER

www.moviemaker.com ★★★★

In addition to in-depth features on digital filmmaking and auteurism, MovieMaker Magazine offers the up-and-coming artist a wealth of contacts. Not only can you find links to every 'indie' film festival across the US and beyond, but the Production Links, Call for Entries and Classifieds sections could prove invaluable to your project.

Want to attend the Rhode Island International Film Festival Summer Internships? Or perhaps you're looking for funding for your film? It's all here. And don't be put off because a majority of the contacts are American; be thankful for any help you can get...

FILMFOUR.COM – MAKING MOVIES

www.filmfour.com ★★★★

Not satisfied with co-producing some of the most popular films in recent memory, such as *The Crying Game* and *The Full Monty*, plus redesigning its Web site to rival any film portal, FilmFour.com now wants to help you fulfil your moviemaking fantasies. Get inspired by interviews and features in the Making Movies section: a how-to from young Brit talent Shane Meadows and behind-the-scenes information on *East Is East* were available when we visited. Additionally, pick up FilmFour.com's recommended reading through a link with bol.com. We also loved the feature in which recognised directors such as Oliver Stone and the Coen Brothers recall what it was like making their first film.

Future 'stars', meanwhile, will want to head straight to the So You Want to Be a... section for helpful tips on how to be a director, actor or producer. Alternatively, if you feel you already know everything, why not send Channel 4 your film (or your star vehicle) for possible inclusion in its Shooting Gallery season?

EXPOSURE

www.exposure.co.uk ★★★★

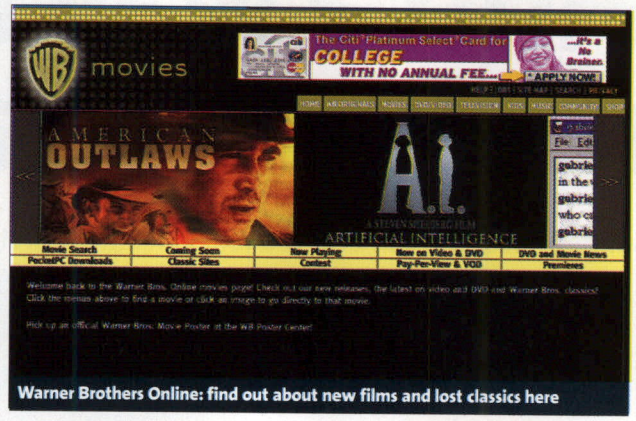
'The Internet resource for low-budget filmmakers' brims with confidence: 'ever dreamt of making a movie? Now you can!' Although similar in its make-up to some of the other sites mentioned here, what makes Exposure stand out is its no-fuss design and optimistic attitude: there's a lot of 'we know you can do it!' at Exposure, which always comes in handy.

Here you can get tips for everything from making a costume drama to how to use gaffer tape. There are tons of contacts plus an active message board where you can gab to your fellow craftsmen.

FILMFOUR.COM
THE ONLY FILM SITE YOU NEED
Revealing Secrets
MAKING MOVIES
Film Lab
Behind The Scenes
Special Features
Festivals & Events
Links
Send Us Your Short Films
THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF MOVIE-MAKING. POLISHED.
East Is East
How To Make A DV Short Film
Shane Meadows - King of Mini DV and rising Brit star director - invites you to share his secret formulae for movie-making success. Watch his shorts, crib from his tips and relax in the commercial breaks.
Welcome to Shane's World...
inside Making Movies...
more...
Film Lab
So You Want To Be A...
FILTHY EARTH
Andrew Kotting's
RECOMMENDED TO BUY
My First Movie
Stephen Lowenstein
Guerilla Film Maker's Handbook
FESTIVALS & EVENTS
FORUM
HAVE YOUR SAY!
FilmFour.com Making Movies: Everyone else is doing it, so why can't you?

@ CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials



Warner Brothers Online: find out about new films and lost classics here

MOVIE NEWS AND RELEASE DATES

Ain't It Cool News
www.aintitcool.com
For the inside track on what's new on screen.

Hollywood.com
www.hollywood.com
The latest gossip from the star-lined streets.

The Internet Movie Database (IMDb)
uk.imdb.com
The bible of online film – use the search engine or be lost.

Mr Showbiz: Movie Index
mrshowbiz.go.com/reviews/moviereviews/index.html
Find out what's playing and what's coming up at this competent site with a discerning edge.

MOVIE REVIEWS

Cinemachine
cinemachine.com
Retrieve film reviews from across the Web.

Movie Review Query Engine
www.mrqe.com
Flamboyantly-titled site featuring 19,000+ films.

ReelViews
movie-reviews.colossus.net
A searchable archive of film critic James Berardinelli's reviews.

The Trailer Park
www.movie-trailers.com
Trailers for all the newest films.

MOVIE THEATRE DIRECTORIES

UCI Cinemas
www.cineworld.co.uk
Find out what's playing, as well as what's on sale in the kiosk here.

Virgin Net – Movies
www.virgin.net/movies
Takes the hassle out of organising a trip to the cinema.

IMDb: the online bible of film

Cineworld – Multiplex Cinema
www.cineworld.co.uk
UK film portal that also includes a cinema finder.

OFFICIAL FILM SITE RESOURCES

Fox Movies
www.foxmovies.com
Provides links to all 20th Century Fox movie releases.

Miramax Cafe
www.miramax.com
Links to all of Miramax's releases, plus general movie news.

Warner Bros Online
www.movies.warnerbros.com
Site featuring WB's new films and lost classics.

Disney Movies
www.disney.co.uk/DisneyMovies
All the kids' faves in one.

TRY A NEWSGROUP

alt.movies.independent
Chat to other first-time filmmakers here.

MAILING LIST

Join a film enthusiasts' mailing list. Send an email marked 'info filmchat' to ***majordomo@lists.uoregon.edu***.

CHAT ROOM

Join the Cinephiles Film Discussion Board, at ***www.cinephiles.net/discuss/messages/1/1.html***.

NEED MORE? **This month's movie sites** What's New p18
Useful media addresses The Directory p78

FOCUS:// Last-minute breaks

Find a way to make a getaway

Suddenly it's summer and you fancy clearing off. Here's your sites for take-off

A no-frills flight won't necessarily be second-rate

@ If you have to bookmark one...

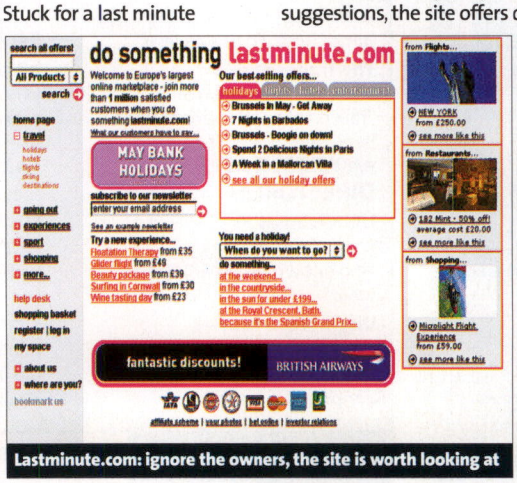
LASTMINUTE.COM

www.lastminute.com ★★★★★

The original and (still) the best. Stuck for a last minute gift? Realised the weather just isn't going to get any better and desperate to get away for the bank holiday? Or do you just need some ideas on what to do at the weekend? Well, instead of buying socks, resigning yourself to getting stuck in traffic jams or spending precious days off at B&Q yet again, log on to Lastminute. com and do something a bit different.

The early May bank holiday was fast approaching when we visited, and deals abounded for this mini-holiday fest. You could go for a deluxe, five-star London hotel break, or fly to New York for four nights for £459, or choose to pamper yourself with a spa break for £175.

But travel isn't the only thing on the menu. As well as ideas for holidays, days out and birthday-gift suggestions, the site offers deals at restaurants, discounts at hotels, and money-saving shopping offers. Some of our favourite deals at the time of writing included a two-course meal at the Conran-owned Zinc Bar & Grill for £11.50 (a saving of around £20). Or head to Six Degrees in the heart of Soho for a three-course meal for £13. The possibilities are bountiful. Ignore the less-than-complimentary press coverage the founders have received; this site is well worth looking at.



Lastminute.com: ignore the owners, the site is worth looking at

Find a place quick with Superbreak

SUPERBREAK

www.superbreak.com ★★★★

If you fancy a quick break somewhere within these isles, then it's worth logging on here to get some last minute hotel deals. This straightforward site deals solely with accommodation (plus select theatre ticket bookings), so you don't have to wade through countless sections to get to the hotel part – instead, simply click on the area you wish to visit, which brings up a list of counties and hotels. Alphabetical listings, with star ratings alongside, make it the work of seconds to find suitable lodgings. Once you've found the accommodation, you can get further details, check availability and prices, and make reservations. Looking for something at short notice doesn't seem to pose any problems; a plea for a place to stay in a couple of days' time offered up a good few options, and same-day reservations were equally fuss-free.

SHENFIELD TRAVEL

www.shenfieldtravel.co.uk ★★★★

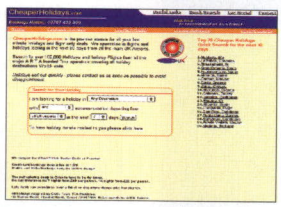
Design is obviously not this site's strong point, but when there are offers as good as these around, who cares? No fancy graphics to detract from the deals here, thank you very much. Just plain text on a plain background that points you to last minute bargains – select Special Offers on the home page, then choose from Cruises, Long-haul, Miscellaneous and Villa Holidays. Yearning for some far-away, guaranteed sunshine right now? Check out the long-haul pages for some great deals to Sri Lanka, Dubai and Florida, among other sun-tastic destinations. When we visited, seven nights in Los Angeles, including flights, hotel and car hire, was available for £544. City breaks to Boston and Miami, among other US cities, were offered in the Miscellaneous section. The site is thorough, the deals great, but there's no online booking. Oh well, you can't have everything...

CHEAPERHOLIDAYS.COM

www.cheaperholidays.com ★★★★

Why do budget holiday sites feel the need to match their economy prices with economy layouts?

Would an attractive design cause prices to skyrocket? This is another site that has overlooked its layout but, again, the deals on offer are such that you'll soon get over it. The 'premier source for all your last-minute holidays and flight-only deals' has a quick-search facility for your chosen destination and dates, or choose from their Top 20 holidays. Each selection has multiple departure and hotel choices, and prices are competitive (for example, seven nights in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico for £439 was on offer when we visited). Be warned, though: to really make this a last minute site, holidays are only available for up to 90 days in advance, so pack quickly...



Yearning for some guaranteed sunshine right now?

TELETEXT – HOLIDAYS

www.teletext.co.uk/holidays/whatnew.asp ★★★★

Packed with last minute offers, this informative site has a pretty good choice of destinations for the traveller looking for late availability deals – for instance, we looked for holidays to the Caribbean departing within three days, and were given the choice of 13 possibilities. And it's not just last minute deals that can be looked up here: little chunks of holiday news, travel ideas and travel alerts are just a few of the subjects that can be checked out.

AIRLINE NETWORK

www.flights-cheap-bargain.co.uk/last-minute-travel/index15.htm ★★★

If you've got friends in America or family in Andorra and feel like popping over to visit – sharpish – log on here for an extensive selection of last minute flights. Looking for flights was straightforward, with each search returning plenty of options – although whether there were any seats actually available for your preferred choice seemed to be an entirely different problem; space on most flights to Auckland next winter could only be found going one way or the other, not both. If you need more than a flight, the site also deals in last minute holidays, hotel bookings, cruises and city breaks, all of which can be booked online. The special offers section contained flights that had to be booked within a week's time, but the savings – we could get a direct flight to Johannesburg for £383 – make it worth the search.

IGLU.COM

www.iglu.com ★★★★

If wrapping up warmly and going on the piste is more your thing, visit Iglu.com for a wide range of winter holidays, bookable both in advance and at the last minute. With preparations for the 2001/2002 winter season only just underway at the time of writing, late deal availability was as thin on the ground as decent snow. In the Special Offers section, however, there was a week's skiing in Whistler up for grabs for £439 per person, down from £985. Savings can be made elsewhere, too – holidays for next season look to be good value with discounts of up to 15 percent and free child places on offer. You can search the site either by resort or by property type, plus reserve airport parking, get the latest snow reports and pick up hints and tips on winter sports.

Teletext
LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEED
Teletext > Holidays > Travel ideas
Apr 27 2001
Home | News | Sport | Finance | Weather | Holidays | TV Plus | Cinema | Games | Feedback
HOLIDAYS
Holidays home
Holiday search
Holiday news
Guides
Travel ideas
Travel focus
Travel alerts
Tailor-made guides
Travel insurance
Browse our ads
Brochure ordering
Currency converter
Flight directory
Flight arrivals
Holiday weather
TRAVEL IDEAS
THE LATEST TRAVEL IDEAS
From fairytale chateaux to perfect oysters, the latest edition of the French Tourist Board's short breaks magazine has suggestions for romantic weekends. 09068 244123 for details.
Sri Lanka's Esala Perahera festival - which features dancing, drumming and 100 decorated elephants - is held in July. 01293 537700.
May is Museums and Galleries Month in Britain. www.may2001.org.uk
Explore Bohemia on a guided walking break in May taking in the Carpathian mountains and the Sumava National Park. 01606 813367 for details.
Bishopscourt Insurance has introduced a travel insurance policy for people with pre-existing medical conditions - AllClear Plus. 01277 267584 for quotations.
A week all-inclusive in the Maldives from £799. 0800 083 6662.
BROWSE OUR ADS
Holiday Brands
Holiday Types
Holiday Destinations
TRAVEL ALERTS
TRAVEL IDEAS
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'Britain's biggest online travel information and booking resource' has flights leaving from across the UK and Ireland.

MyOwnPrice.com
www.myownprice.com
This site asks how much you're prepared to pay and then tries to match it. Very useful.

Deckchair UK
www.deckchair.com
Comprehensive flight-finder.

Cheap Flights.com
www.cheapflights.com
Where thrifty surfers go for flights; they also do package holiday and late deals.

Deckchair UK: top flight-finder

DESTINATION INFO

Virgin Net Travel – City Guides
www.virgin.net/travel/cityguides
Provides all the information you'll need for a short break.

Rough Guides
www.roughguides.com
From the publishers of the well-established guidebooks.

Lonely Planet Online
www.lonelyplanet.com
Let the travel experts guide you around your destination.

Beeb.com – BBC Holiday
www.holiday.beeb.com
Offers advice on everything you'll need for a perfect break.

DOS AND DON'TS

Tips 4 Trips
www.tips4trips.com
1,000 handy 'tips for trips'.

Foreign & Commonwealth Office – Travel Advice
www.fco.gov.uk/travel
Get info on countries before setting off.

The Travel News Organisation
www.travel-news.org
Independent news for travellers.

eTravel.org
www.etravel.org
Travel mag with plenty of tips.

ACCOMMODATION

Places To Stay
www.placestostay.com
This site will find you a suitable place to rest up.

CottageNet UK
www.cottage-net.ndirect.co.uk
Self-catering database for the UK and Ireland.

Smooth Hound Systems
www.smoothhound.co.uk
Cheap UK B&Bs and hotels.

Holidayleaders.com
www.holidayleaders.com
A global directory of villas to rent.

NEWSGROUP

alt.travel.uk.marketplace
You may be able to pick up a cheap, last minute holiday here.

CHAT ROOM

Find someone to travel with at ***www.passportwilltravel.com***.

NEED MORE? **Useful travel addresses** The Directory p78

WORDS: CLAIRE McHATTIE; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

FOCUS:// Extreme sports

It's just not cricket

Tired of the same old sedate sports? Try living life on the edge instead

@ If you have to bookmark one...

SOULGEAR

www.soulgear.com ★★★★★

Extreme sports are steadily making their way into the establishment of the sports world. Covering everything from surfing to freestyle skateboarding, action sports are grabbing the world's attention. SoulGear is one of the best sites to keep you up-to-date with this new generation of excitement. Anyone interested in extreme sports would benefit from a visit or two here. Besides, with all the interesting little gems that are embedded into the site, you'll be busy for quite a few hours.

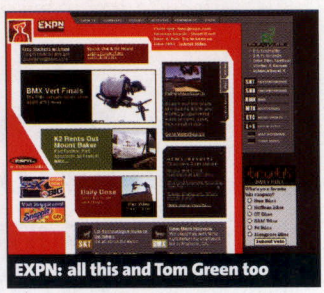
SoulGear: where the disciples of dirt congregate and communicate

Not only do you get the latest news on the leading extreme sports, but you also get the chance to talk to members of SoulGear live in a chat room. Even better, there is a section that concentrates on your physical and mental well-being. Covering the main areas and main extreme events, this site can fill you in on whatever you want to know. They have information and other little titbits about your favourite extreme sport and also have their own shop where you can buy the gear you desire or need – breaking the nose off your board can cost you a small fortune. Or you can stop in at the swap gear shop. Buy or sell, whatever your desire, there's no listing fee and the customer service is genuinely helpful. The gear looks great, so you'll be stylish no matter where you go. Bookmark it now.

EXPN.COM

Expn.go.com ★★★★★

When you hear the words 'extreme sports' the first thing you think of is Tony Hawk and the X Games. The next thought is of the sports media champion ESPN. This site from ESPN gives a good rundown of the various extreme sports. With a focus on the most popular of such as skateboarding, BMX, and the X Games, you'll be able to keep track of your favourite sport and athletes. With videos, TV listings, contests, and a few other fun things, this site will entertain any extreme sports lover. Ever watch *The Tom Green Show*? Well, with the Daily Dose, you will see this outlandish and



EXPN: all this and Tom Green too

bizarre nutter running his School of Skateboarding. There are also interviews with the star athletes such as Mat Hoffman and Dave Mirra. And to find out what's next on the ever-evolving rosta of extreme sports, check out the events calendar.

EXHILARATION

www.exhilaration.co.uk ★★★★★

A site for the frivolous. If you find yourself with extra funds and holiday time, you might want to look into some of the holidays – half day, full day, or even weekend events – that Exhilaration has lined up. From tank driving to poncing about in a castle in the Scottish countryside, there's a wide range of events to choose from. If that's not extreme enough, you can always go skydiving or paintballing. Go alone, go with a group, or take your company for a corporate event.

9FEET

www.9feet.com ★★★★

You can't get away with it: if you're going to take up adventure sports you need to get kitted out. So get your outdoor gear for mountain biking, hiking or climbing here at one of the best online shopping sites for outdoor adventure gear. With its stock made up of hiking, climbing, mountain biking, and snow sports, you'll find something to your taste. The book and map section will help you scoot yourself from place to place.

WORDS: SHAWNA NOBLE; PICTURES: STOCKFILE/STEVEN BEHR

EXTREME SPORTS
www.extremesports.com ★★★★
It's the one that bagged the best URL and it covers a wide range: surf, skate, snow, wake boards, BMX, MX biking and motorsport are the key extremes at this site. With news updates from events, athletes, the industry and other factors from each sport, you're sure to quench your adrenaline thirst. There are also video galleries and updates on weather conditions near you so you won't be kept from getting out and perfecting your own tricks. If you think we forgot the Gravity Games, you're mistaken: the site provides coverage of the late summer action sports event that pulled in the most viewers of any extreme sports event last year. And like any good broadcaster the site won't just be covering the Games themselves, but also the happenings in the Festival Village that encompass and round off the games.

Skateboards: planks with wheels

BOARDIT.COM
www.boardit.com
★★★★★
If you like the snow in general and snowboarding in particular, then take a gander at this lovely piece of work. Up-to-date with resort weather and tips on how to make up a snowboarding holiday (even at the last minute), you can't go wrong. Above and beyond the call of duty, there is a section dedicated to helping everyone from the beginner to the expert in improving technique. If that's not your style, you can ask others in the message boards. Been hanging around the slopes and hearing other boarders talking in a language you can't understand? No, it's not German, they're probably talking in trick-lingo. Check out the trickionary and get up to speed with the jargon of the advanced, experienced and obsessed.

SKATEBOARD.COM
www.skateboard.com ★★★★★
With a phrase like 'Anything and Everything about Skateboarding' this sounded like the site for those of you looking for your skater fix. Hit the Curb to get the latest news in the skateboarding world or look up the skatepark nearest you. Or go Hang Out and see all the amusing links and other distractions this site has to offer. New to skateboarding? Then step into Skate 101 and learn all about it. There's also a 3D chat room, skateboard TV, message boards, and contests. And similar to boardit.com, this site also has a section all laid out to help beginners take care of their boards and themselves, and even learn the skating lingo.

This site will help you climb every mountain

UK CLIMBING
www.ukclimbing.com
★★★★★
Calling all climbers: for a comprehensive site full of listings, news, and databases this is a must. Take on some of the best UK crags around with the information here. Don't care to climb in the rain? That's fine. Go to the UK Wall section and find an indoor wall near you. The whole site is kept from redlining by using searches in each different section. If you think climbers are complete nutters, they even have a section to prove you wrong. No matter how interested you are in climbing, this site will help you climb every mountain.

Extreme Sports: video galleries, weather updates and pictures of snowy mountains

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Web essentials

TEAMtalk.com
Place your bets with TEAMtalk.com
Bookmark this page
Choose a sport!
UK Football
World Football
Rugby League
Rugby Union
Racing NEW!
Sports Radio
Games Room
Sports Store
Commercial
About Us
Sverige
Soccer
RacingOne
UK FOOTBALL
Zola signs new Chelsea contract
Gianfranco Zola has signed a new two-year extension to his playing contract at Chelsea - with the option of a further two years as a coach. > more
Choose a team!
WORLD FOOTBALL
Argentine strike could be lifted
FOLLOWING MEETINGS between the Labour Ministry and the Argentine FA yesterday, it is possible that the player strike could be lifted on Friday. > more
Choose a Country
RUGBY UNION
Thiel set for Rec switch
Bath have held talks with Canadian international prop Jon Thiel about a switch from Sale Sharks to the Recreation Ground. > more
Choose a team!
RUGBY LEAGUE
Henry Paul smashes record
Henry Paul licked eight from eight on Wednesday night to smash Darryl Halligan's world record of 30 consecutive kicks at goal in rugby league. > more
Choose a team!
RACING
Welcome to TEAMtalk.com!
Have a Question?
CLICK HERE TO BET
Ladbrokes
oxi.com
Get an objective view of all the latest football news at *www.teamtalk.com*

LATEST NEWS AND SCORES

ESPN.com
espn.go.com
Scores for all sports, with a distinctly American bias.

Sky Sports
www.skysports.com
Forget begrudging the TV subscription fee – this is hot sports news from Sky that comes free of charge.

Soccernet
www.soccernet.com
Score flashes from all UK games (part of the ESPN network).

Sporting Life
www.sporting-life.com
News, scores and betting advice on everything from football to the NFL.

Sky Sports.com: top news for free

TOP FOOTBALL SITES

Football365.com
www.football365.com
Humour, news and plenty of features.

FourFourTwo
www.fourfourtwo.com
The online home of Britain's best football magazine.

TEAMtalk
www.teamtalk.com
Independent club news service.

soccer-links.com
www.soccer-links.com
Links for world sites.

ONLINE BETTING SITES

Blue Square
www.bluesq.com
The best-known online bookie.

Sporting Index
www.sportingindex.com
The biggest spread-betting site.

Victor Chandler
www.victorchandler.com
User-friendly site from the traditional bookie.

FOLLOW EVENTS LIVE

PlanetFootball.com
www.planetfootball.com
Hub site for English football clubs' audio broadcasts.

Sport On Air
www.sportonair.com
A host of bang up-to-date streamed broadcasts, covering news from football to cricket.

talkSPORT
www.talksport.net
Listen to the radio station's sports coverage as it happens.

SITES FOR INDIVIDUAL SPORTS

Planet-rugby.com
www.planet-rugby.com
Where the oval ball rules – hot news from around the globe.

Snooker Net
www.snookernet.com
'The Internet's Biggest and Best Independent Snooker Site'.

CricInfo
www-uk.cricket.org
The ultimate cricket site.

FIND A NEWSGROUP

rec.skydiving
If skydiving's your thing, get nattering here.

FIND A MAILING LIST

Meet fans of *all* sports by sending an email marked 'info Allsports' to ***allsports@onelist.com***.

NEED MORE? Useful sports addresses The Directory p78

FOCUS:// Addictions

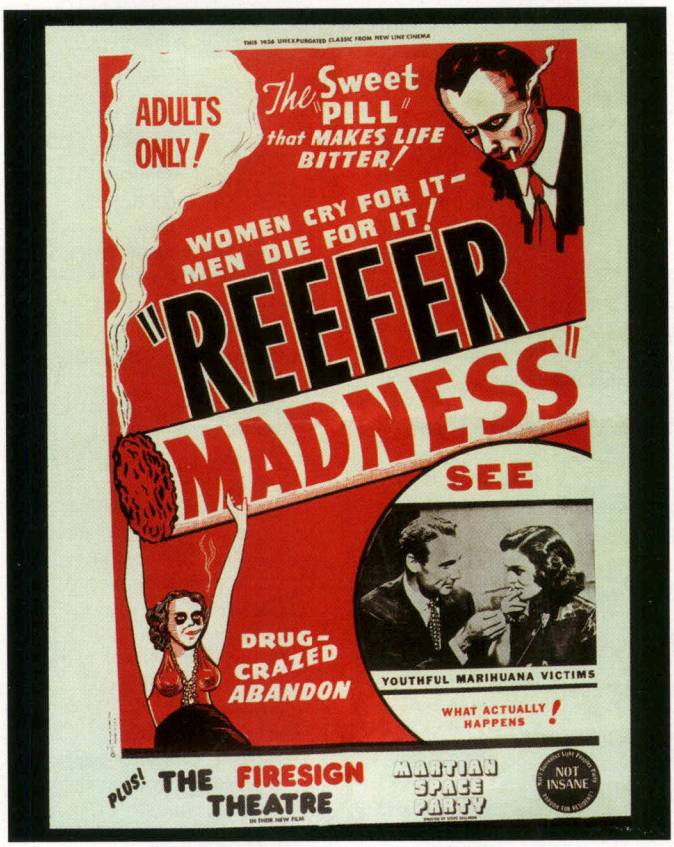
Click to kick the habit

Have a dastardly dependence to ditch? Check these online saviours where help is always at hand

CENTER FOR ONLINE ADDICTION

www.netaddiction.com ★★★★★

Not all things to which you can become addicted are bad. Take the Internet, for example; without it you'd be looking at a blank page all day long and we'd be out of a job, but you have to know when to log off. If you fear you may be turning into a mouse potato, you might like to check out the Center for Online Addiction, which has a 20-question test to assess your level of addiction. If you find that rouses your appetite for online quizzes, perhaps you could try the other six online tests, for this site covers a variety of obsessions: information overload (compulsive surfing and searching), Net gaming (including gambling and auctions), cyber-relational addiction (chat room habituation sometimes leading to adultery) and, of course, its sinister sister cybersexual addiction. The Center has tests and resources for all of these, plus some information (and more tests) for those left behind by addiction (here termed 'cyberwidows'). Just don't stay on the site too long or it might well become counterproductive.



WEB OF ADDICTIONS

www.well.com/user/woa ★★★★

'We take addictions seriously,' states the front page of the Web Of Addictions. 'You won't find glib, hip treatment of this very serious topic here.' Hence the feeble pun of the site's name, backed up by a Commodore 64-style drawing of a stick figure falling into, you'll never guess, a spider's web. Which gives you an indication of this site's somewhat condescending attitude, that drugs are a Very Bad Thing, but at least it deigns to help addicts rather than burning them at the stake. In fact, if you can bear the slightly moralistic tone, the site is a fund of great resources to help kick addiction – even if some of the impressive array of links make the amateurish mistake of doubling up the 'http://' prefix in the URL. The 'Rolodex' gives the numbers of dozens of support agencies., too It's a holding page with an attitude but the Web of Addictions is a very useful bookmark.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org ★★★★

The other AA (the one not based in Basingstoke, surprisingly enough) falls over itself to introduce the newcomer to its services. There are several first ports of call for the nervous newcomer; 'a newcomer asks' might seem obvious, but then there's 'is AA for you?' and 'information on Alcoholics Anonymous'. Despite its slightly doom-laden title, the section entitled 'Is there an alcoholic in your life?' gives concerned friends and family genuine belief in the future with its 5,000-word 'message of hope', and there's a similarly thorough message for those who think AA won't work for them because they're black, Jewish, atheist, gay, old, young or clergymen – from similar AA alumni who thought the same until they kicked the habit. A useful starting point in your search for help, or if you're looking for specific AA information.

AA: no use in a motorway emergency

NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DRUG ABUSE

www.nida.nih.gov ★★★★★

Despite the 'war on drugs' focusing on knocking out supply rather than demand, a level of use which some might term an unfortunate addiction is, in governmental terms, still drug abuse. Hence the name of the NIDA, the 'principal biomedical and behavioral research agency of the US Government'. As you might

@ If you have to bookmark one...

THE CENTRE FOR RECOVERY

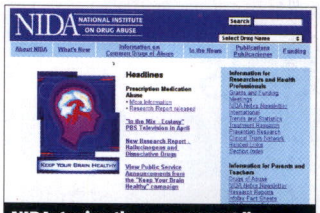
www.recovery.org.uk ★★★★★

An interestingly expansive Web site run by an Aberystwyth-based street agency which follows the 12-step programme theory. Due to its definition of drugs as 'mood-altering chemicals', it also covers tranquillisers, sleeping pills and alcohol – but as these are also addictive, it fits in nicely with our remit. Warning of the escalation of usage as escapism from the problems we all face, the Centre for Recovery gives impartial and interesting information on various stimulants, depressants, analgesics and hallucinogens. The Question & Answer section could be laid out more thoughtfully – at present, visitors have to navigate a small scroll bar at the top to find the questions – but generally the site is nicely thought out, with a design which skilfully treads the line between showy and functional.

So the site efficiently outlines the nature of addiction, but what does it do to help addicts? As you might expect there's a page which links to Amazon to buy all the books you'll ever need on the subject, but there's also free practical advice in the 'living drug free' section. There's a download centre which allows you to save pages to disk for later offline viewing, and there's even a downloadable pilot-learning HTML programme about drug issues. Indeed the only downside to the entire site is the Teen section – with an opening page claiming to be 'engaging Warp speed' and a name-input system as an attempt at personalisation 'by the power of magic'. Putting people's names at the end of sentences is one of the surest signs of insincerity.

The Centre For Recovery: covers all the vices

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON, PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION



NIDA: toeing the government line

expect there's little or no quarter given to positive reflections on drug use, but it's often useful for addicts (or those who care for them) to check the hard medical facts. And there are plenty of them on this often rather dry site. There's a fund of resources for researchers and health professionals, but it's not merely medics and academics who'll benefit from a visit to the NIDA; the Parents & Teachers section has fact sheets, research reports and links written in straight English. Best of all is the Information on Common Drugs of Abuse, which covers not only a wide range of substances but also drug testing in the workplace, research on both treatment and prevention plus a round-up of the latest trends and statistics. Not the most racy of reads but an important resource all the same...

COCAINE ANONYMOUS

www.ca.org ★★★★

Nice short URL for this non-profit organisation which also helps out users of crack and 'other mind-altering substances' which are often used as a substitute when addicts can't get their fix.

There are phone numbers for local contact groups in the States, Canada, UK and the Netherlands, but what of the online aids? A self-administered test featuring two dozen questions helps visitors to check their addiction level, and if the answer is dangerous there are a couple of PDF starter kits to download and peruse at your leisure. But in common with most of the AA spin-offs, the core of the 'treatment' is a 12-step programme which largely consists of sitting in a room with first-name acquaintances helping each other get over their particular poison.

For instance, if you suffer from reefer madness you should try to remember Marijuana Anonymous (***www.marijuana-anonymous.org***), although MA seems to have a surprisingly laissez-faire attitude to quitting.

On the other hand, if you're the type of person who'd stake the house on which of two raindrops will be first to reach the windowsill, your safest bet might be to check out Gamblers Anonymous (***www.gamblersanonymous.org***). »

LINKS ;-) DARWIN AWARDS

The bright side of death

In death, as in life, there is humour to be found – and never more so than when the death in question is comically unfortunate. Such black humour and love of the macabre has helped the Darwin Awards (***www.darwinawards.com***) become one of the most popular cult hits on the Web.

The basic principle behind the awards is to acknowledge those who eliminate themselves from the gene pool by dying in ridiculous ways. Which just goes to show you that maybe your mother wasn't wrong when she told you not to eat paint chips.

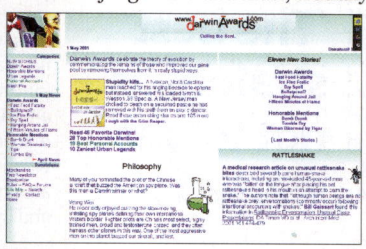
Devised by a molecular biologist and based on Charles Darwin's famous theory of evolution, the idea of the Darwin Awards is simple. As stated on the site 'the Darwin Awards commemorate individuals who protect our gene pool by making the ultimate sacrifice of their own lives. Darwin Award winners eliminate themselves in an extraordinarily idiotic manner, thereby improving our species' chances of long-term survival.'

People die tragically and the rest of us laugh

In other words, people die tragically and the rest of us point and laugh at what they've done afterwards. It's like the Mel Brooks quote: 'Tragedy is when I cut my finger; comedy is when you walk into an open sewer and die'. Not everyone agrees with this outlook on life (or death), but it pulls in about a million visitors a month and has over 150,000 subscribers to the bi-monthly newsletter. The site was created in 1993 when Wendy Northcutt passed some bizarre stories around a small group of friends. From there, word got around and the audience became so far-reaching that building a site became inevitable.

This site is now fully established with categories, submissions, voting polls, and forums. Anyone is allowed to submit or nominate a certain unfortunate as long as it meets the requirements. Darwin Awards are proud to state they are not racially or culturally biased. Everyone stands the same chance of winning, as stupidity is an inherent human trait.

The rules to the awards are fairly simple, but like any other competition, there is a high standard to meet. The story has to be 'an astounding misapplication of judgement' and must, crucially, be true.



Not that such stringent criteria stop the awards from being possibly the funniest site on the Web, with glowing write-ups from both highbrow and tabloid media. Current favourite fatalities include the dad who was stabbed by his 10-year old son after handing him a blade and, er, daring him to put the knife in. Not to mention the woman who rolled off her roof after deciding to kip there while stoned. Or the firefighter who decided to impress his boss by starting and then heroically putting out a blaze – but then got trapped inside the building he was trying to ignite. Imagine a Coen brothers movie coming true and you won't be far off the mark.

And best of all, this one can run and run. Because no matter how concentrated the gene pool becomes by such random acts of stupidity, you can rest assured there'll always be someone prepared to take death one step further...

Death: no laughing matter

FOCUS:// Addictions <cont>

BETTY FORD CENTER

www.bettyfordcenter.org ★★★★

It must be a strange situation when your name becomes inextricably associated with alcoholism and drug addiction. But such has been the case with Betty Ford, a 'recovering alcoholic' whose Californian clinic became the retreat of choice for Hollywood stars in need of a clean-up. (We hoped for a star-studded list from the page marked 'Alumni Room', but it turned out to be merely a password-protected mailing list for past attendees.) Now, with the virtual tour, you can pretend that you too have both an addiction and the money to afford the finest drying-out clinic in the business. Spin the VR cameras in the Serenity Room or the Family Program Auditorium to get an idea of the visitors' impressions, and if you're so famous that money is no object, you can binge-buy books and videos in the store. It's got to be better than staying on the sauce, whatever you do.

'The best strategy is not to get started...'

RNET HEALTH

www.rnethealth.com ★★★★★

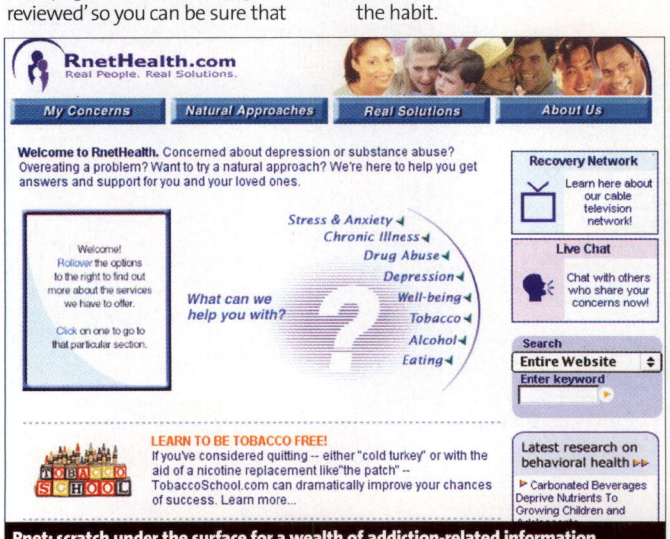
An iceberg of a site. It may look from the front page like there's only the merest detail on Rnet, but a little digging via a few judicious clicks and you're into a wealth of information relating to smoking, alcohol, drugs and over-eating, among others. Even better, as it proudly proclaims at the bottom of each page, 'all articles are physician-reviewed' so you can be sure that this isn't some cobbled-together collection of opinions and half-truths. At all times you can consult the tastefully under-designed menus above, around or below the text to jump to your relevant section. Thankfully not all of them are as poor as one of the first sections we sampled, which was (for no real reason) Prevention of Marijuana Drug Abuse: it simply says 'As with any other addictive substance, the best preventive strategy is not to get started.' Thankfully the plethora of natural approaches (nutritional and alternative remedies) redeemed what is, when you dig into it, an eminently useful and informative site.

SMOKING: DON'T GIVE UP GIVING UP

www.givingupsmoking.co.uk

★★★★★

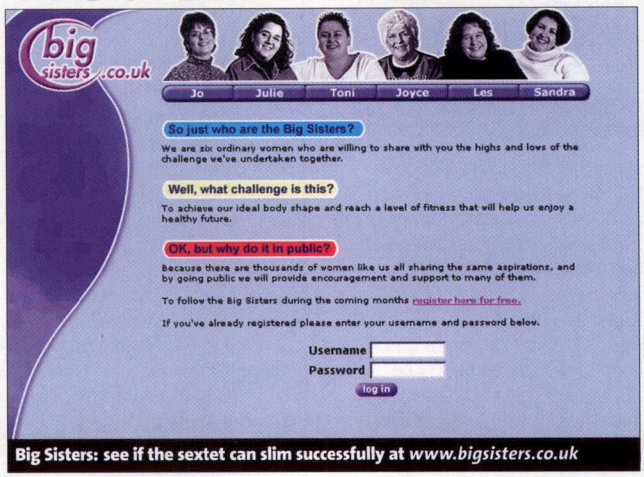
Readers who bought our April issue (and if not, why not?) can refer to a wealth of sites dedicated to helping smokers kick the habit, but this one – our category winner last time – is so good it deserves another quick plug here. It's simply the best online way to ditch the weed – perhaps, because of its public (not to say legal) acceptability, the hardest habit of all to kick. Log on for a wealth of handy hints, off-putting facts and practical advice which should persuade even the most hardened puffer to think again. With plenty of links and useful addresses, this should be a crucial starting point in your quest to kick the habit.


RnetHealth.com
Real People. Real Solutions.
My Concerns
Natural Approaches
Real Solutions
About Us
Welcome to RnetHealth. Concerned about depression or substance abuse? Overeating a problem? Want to try a natural approach? We're here to help you get answers and support for you and your loved ones.
Recovery Network
Learn here about our cable television network!
Live Chat
Chat with others who share your concerns now!
Search
Entire Website
Enter keyword
Welcome! Rollover the options to the right to find out more about the services we have to offer.
Click on one to go to that particular section.
What can we help you with?
Stress & Anxiety
Chronic Illness
Drug Abuse
Depression
Well-being
Tobacco
Alcohol
Eating
LEARN TO BE TOBACCO FREE!
If you've considered quitting -- either "cold turkey" or with the aid of a nicotine replacement like"the patch" -- TobaccoSchool.com can dramatically improve your chances of success. Learn more...
Latest research on behavioral health
Carbonated Beverages Deprive Nutrients To Growing Children and

Rnet: scratch under the surface for a wealth of addiction-related information

@CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials


big sisters .co.uk
Jo
Julie
Toni
Joyce
Les
Sandra
So just who are the Big Sisters?
We are six ordinary women who are willing to share with you the highs and lows of the challenge we've undertaken together.
Well, what challenge is this?
To achieve our ideal body shape and reach a level of fitness that will help us enjoy a healthy future.
OK, but why do it in public?
Because there are thousands of women like us all sharing the same aspirations, and by going public we will provide encouragement and support to many of them.
To follow the Big Sisters during the coming months register here for free.
If you've already registered please enter your username and password below.
Username
Password
log in

Big Sisters: see if the sextet can slim successfully at *www.bigsisters.co.uk*

ONLINE DIAGNOSES

InteliHealth
www.intelihealth.com
A full and frank site to help solve problems. Also includes up-to-date health news and an email newsletter service.

MayoClinic.com
www.mayoclinic.com
Features a personalised health planner, online weight-loss programme and news briefs.

Quackwatch
www.quackwatch.com
As a member of the Consumer Federation of America, this site endeavours to combat health-related frauds while encouraging visitors to make sound choices.

DIETING SITES

BigSisters
www.bigsisters.co.uk
Find inspiration on this site, where six British women are endeavouring to lose a combined 20 stone before July.

Prevention
www.healthyideas.com
Online women's magazine, featuring recipes and fitness tips.

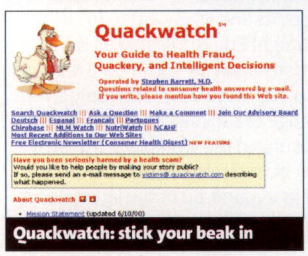
3 Fat Chicks on a Diet!
www.3fatchicks.com
Find motivation through the success stories of three formerly overweight sisters. Includes recipe and exercise ideas.

WeightWatchers.com
uk.weightwatchers.com
Helps you lose weight with a 'point system'; also includes recipe ideas.

PREGNANCY

Mother and Baby Magazine
www.motherandbaby.co.uk
Features shopping, chat and a dads' zone – oh, and a video of a water birth, if you really want to see such a thing.

The Baby Register
www.thebabyregistry.co.uk
Share tips and advice with other mothers and fathers.



Quackwatch: stick your beak in

OFFICIAL HEALTH SITES

NHS Direct
www.doh.gov.uk/nhsexec/direct.htm
Get help from the NHS 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

BMA Online
www.bma.org.uk
Provides information on how to become a doctor or nurse.

British Dental Health Foundation
www.dentalhealth.org.uk
Get your dentistry queries answered online.

NEWSGROUP

alt.support.stop-smoking
Kick the habit with others.

MAILING LIST

Join a support group for people who want to quit smoking by sending an email marked 'info smokefree' to ***Majordomo@List-Server.net***.

CHAT ROOM

www.support-group.com Chat dedicated to various addiction-related subjects.

NEED MORE? **Useful health addresses** The Directory p78

GRAPHICS
DVD
SOUND
SPEAKERS
CD-RW
Wouldn't it be cool to carry around your entire music collection?
Sorted.
Live the experience
DIGITAL AUDIO PLAYER
DAP JUKEBOX
The Creative D.A.P Jukebox stores 4 days of hi-fi quality music using MP3 and other future formats. You can enjoy listening to 150 albums, that's 1500 tracks of EAX enhanced audio, wherever you go. Find out more about our latest Personal Digital Entertainment products at WWW.CREATIVEJUKEBOX.COM
CREATIVE
PERSONAL DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT
Starts Here.
All Your Music. Wherever You Go.

FOCUS:// Budgeting

Keep more of your hard-earned cash

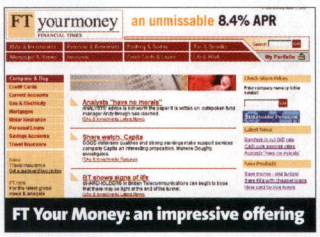
If your life is spend, spend, spend, the Web can help keep things under control

Budgeting: not just for spendthrifts

FT YOUR MONEY

www.ftyourmoney.com ★★★★

The famous pink organ may have been beaten to the top slot, but its personal finance site remains an impressive offering. Obviously, it has the best links to the *Financial Times* news and features, making it an ideal site for those of you with a stock portfolio. For example, the My Portfolio feature allows you to receive personalised updates on your investments. But there's a whole host of other goodies, too, like product finders, comparison tools, guides and calculators, plus the chance to quiz the FT's experts on any monetary topic. It's also the only site apart from This is Money to offer an income and expenses calculator. The site is also easy to navigate, as it's divided into eight subject areas, covering ISAs and investments, pensions and retirement, banking and saving, tax and benefits, mortgages and homes, insurance, credit cards and loans and life and work (including travel money issues).



FT Your Money: an impressive offering

GUARDIAN UNLIMITED – MONEY

money.guardian.co.uk ★★★★

As you'd expect from a member of *The Guardian* newspaper group's online portfolio, this is the most right-on money site on the Web. There are sections dealing with the special financial issues faced by the gay and student communities, for example, plus a guide to ethical investments. Elsewhere, an impressive news and in-depth features section leads into specialist areas covering home, travel, savings, debt, banking, shares, ISAs, pensions, tax, wills and cards and loans. If you're a *Guardian* reader, you'll love the tone and focus of the site. If not, don't be put off – this remains a great source of financial advice, whatever your reading habits.

MONEY EXTRA

www.moneyextra.com ★★★★

Whoa! This is one packed site. News, features and tons of comparisons and calculators to make sure you're getting the best deal on just about every financial service going, including foreign currency information. Of particular note are its tax calculator, school fees calculator and online will wizard – which can help you produce a valid will in under five minutes, for free. Site highlights are also available direct to your WAP phone, so you can monitor your portfolio on the move. And unlike most of these sites, it's also got an effective search engine, making it easier to sift through.

MONEY SUPERMARKET

www.moneysupermarket.com ★★★★

Supermarket is an apt name for this site – it's packed with stuff, but its layout can be rather confusing. As well as the everyday money site produce – financial news, rate comparisons on bank accounts, credit cards, loans and mortgages and Buy.co.uk's bill calculators (see below) – there's some own-brand specials, too. For example, there's a mortgage auction area, where you can get a range of lenders to compete to offer you a mortgage, plus Redemption Buster, which lets you check whether you could save money by re-mortgaging. There's also a handy conveyancing guide, which with the wealth of mortgage info makes this an ideal site for property owners and buyers.

LYCOS MONEY

www.lycos.co.uk/webguides/mc ★★★

If you spend quite a while sniffing around the Lycos portal, this is just a quick click away. It encompasses everything from business to personal finance via insurance and investments. Such a range makes the site a good choice for existing or potential small business owners, with guides on writing business plans, getting into e-commerce, marketing and recruitment and so on, plus a plethora of personal finance information. There's minimal interactivity, but Lycos does use Buy.co.uk's excellent set of household bill calculators to good effect.

@ If you have to bookmark one...

THIS IS MONEY

www.thisismoney.com ★★★★★

'Where money talks your language' is the catchphrase of this one-stop-shop site. Not sure about that (seems expletive-free to us), but it's certainly refreshingly free of jargon, even going as far as to provide plain English versions of the small print on common financial forms.

The site is divided into eight main sections: news and markets; saving and investing; mortgages; pensions; insurance; taxes; small business; and borrow and spend. There's also a handy fact-file reference area, with all sections of the site regularly updated to reflect the changing rates available.

This is Money has the best range of interactive offerings, too. There's an ask-the-experts facility and a message board where you can chat online, but more impressively a huge range of calculators. No, not the add-and-subtract variety, but ones that can work out just about every financial option. There's calculators for savings and investment, tax, holidays and travel, insurance, loans and utilities bills. But perhaps of most use to us spendthrifts is the household budget calculator, which forces you to face up to just how much you spend on everything and identify areas where savings could be made.

Also up our street is the Vice-ometer, which works out your annual 'vice' bill and calculates how much the government makes in duty from your drinking, smoking and gambling.

Despite its wealth (ha!) of content, This is Money is easy to navigate, with some nifty little extras, such as the option to easily email features to others. Our only caveat concerns the editorial stance – the site is from Associated Press (home of the *Daily Mail* and *Evening Standard*), and if the tone of said papers is not to your liking, you may find some of the features grate.

This Is Money: forces you to face the grim reality of budgeting

WORDS: CLARE NEWSOME; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

MONEY CENTRAL

www.moneycentral.msn.co.uk

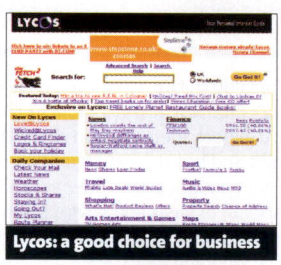
★★★

Another portal offering, this time from MSN. The site is a blend of news and features, with a range of content provided by third-party sites – including Money Extra, Credit Suisse and Charcol, the latter giving access to about the most comprehensive mortgage comparision service online. The site's unique feature is its link with Microsoft's Money 2001 finance-management software. Registered users can get £20 off the standard edition of Money 2001 and the software itself links directly to the site for easy access to the latest rates for interest calculations.

MONEY TELEGRAPH

www.money.telegraph.co.uk ★★★

Yet another newspaper-linked site, this one – surprise, surprise – from the *Telegraph* stable of titles. Inevitably, there's a strong news and features section, split between City news and personal finance, but there are interactive gems, too. The savings calculator service is better than most, with the option for a report on your plan, and there's a best buy section comparing a wide range of financial services options. There are more links than most, too – through both a Find An IFA service and a click-through to a 6000-strong directory of financial institutions. And fans of the Alex cartoon strip can get a daily dose of their favourite, too.



Lycos: a good choice for business

You can get lenders to compete for your cash

BUY.CO.UK

www.buy.co.uk ★★★

Don't care about financial news and features and just want to cut straight to the money-saving comparison and calculator services? Then this is your site. Buy.co.uk claims it can save households an average of £150 by finding the best deals on a range of utility supplies, personal loans and credit cards. Its mobile phone tariff comparison service is particularly smart, which is why it pops up on several other sites. The site also provides free access to a selection of Which? Energy Reports.

@ CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials

Motley Fool: you'd be daft to not cock an interested ear to the Motley crew

INVESTING

Citywire.co.uk
www.citywire.co.uk
Company news and advice.

The Motley Fool UK
www.fool.co.uk
One of *the net*'s favourite sites, offering helpful advice for the learner investor.

Ask Figaro
www.askfigaro.com
Compare financial products' results here.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Investment Week
www.invweek.co.uk
Monetary advice from the in-depth *Investment Week*.

eye4money
www.eye4money.com
UK and US financial information – plus a share simulation game.

hemscott.NET
www.hemscott.com
Get access to a veritable goldmine of analysis from this easy-to-use, no-nonsense site.

MONEY NEWS AND SHARE PRICES

FT.com
www.ft.com
The mother of all money sites, from the makers of the financial bible.

Bloomberg.com UK
www.bloomberg.co.uk
Up-to-date data for the professional investor.

Sharepages.com
www.sharepages.com
News from all the markets in a quick-glance, easy-to-navigate format.

SHARE TRADING

Stocktrade
www.stocktrade.co.uk
Keep your finger on the pulse with this site, which offers real-time prices.

Barclays Stockbrokers
www.barclays-stockbrokers.co.uk
Real-time share dealing from one of the biggest names in banking.

Forex-CMC
www.forex-cmc.co.uk
The first online foreign-exchange dealer.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Interactive Investor International
www.iii.co.uk
Advice for individual investors.

Hemscott.NET: news from around the markets

Tax Assist Direct Ltd
www.taxassist.co.uk
Help with the taxman for small business and investors.

NEWSGROUP

uk.finance
Advice on a variety of topics.

CHAT ROOM

Investor MSN
investor.msn.com
Chat with other finance fans, courtesy of Microsoft.

NEED MORE? This month's bargains Dealfinder p28
Useful money addresses The Directory p86

FOCUS:// Weddings

I'm getting married on a modem

There's no need to go through hell for a marriage made in heaven...

Weddings: big isn't always best

BLISS!

www.blissezine.com ★★★★

This American site provides more interactive tools than any other wedding site we found. As well as more familiar facilities like forums, digital postcards and chat, there's a wedding toast writer, a budget planner (in US dollars), a search programme to help you choose your flowers, and short videos demonstrating do-it-yourself wedding crafts such as making a hand-tied bridal bouquet or a wedding towel cake (just as weird as it sounds). You'll need the plug-ins, however, to access the Weddings Mini-planner and Bridesmaid's Guide. There's a long list of wedding subjects covered, though none of them in great detail. The wedding traditions and superstitions are more substantial, but take the latter with a pinch of salt; if the bride rips her dress on the day, she'll have enough to worry about without wondering if her marriage is going to end in death.

HITCHED.CO.UK

www.hitched.co.uk ★★★★

Hitched has resources for all the key players, with guidelines for best man, groom, and bride's father. And in the section on writing and delivering a wedding speech, the 70 real-life speeches transcribed for inspiration includes some by brides and maids of honour, too. There's even a joke section, though it's best used with discretion. Then there are the detailed check lists for bridesmaids, ushers and the best man in the six months up to, and even after, the wedding. It's a pity, however, that neither these nor the bride and groom's wedding planner are any more than 'to do' lists, offering no interactive tools such as reminder emails or the ability to cross off completed tasks. But the site still has lots of expert advice to offer, such as how to choose a good wedding photographer and even how to spot a good diamond.

WEB WEDDING

www.webwedding.co.uk ★★★★

If you're finding even the prospect of planning your wedding overwhelming, you might prefer WebWedding to more extensive wedding sites. That's not to say it doesn't have a lot to offer; in fact, there's an impressive range of sections and a well-organised and personalisable interactive wedding planner. But it serves up only manageable content, rather than attempting to choke you with endless information, making the whole process a little less intimidating. The Essentials succinctly advises on different aspects of etiquette, arranging ceremonies, hair and beauty, photography and so on, and Regulars includes a comprehensive UK supplier search directory where you can find alternative transport, dancing lessons and ice sculptures. Particularly impressive is the extensive men's section, which provides guidance on everything from popping the question to choosing your best man. Most subjects are divided into pertinent sub-sections, but there's never too much to take in.

BRIDAL BOX

www.bridalbox.co.uk ★★★★

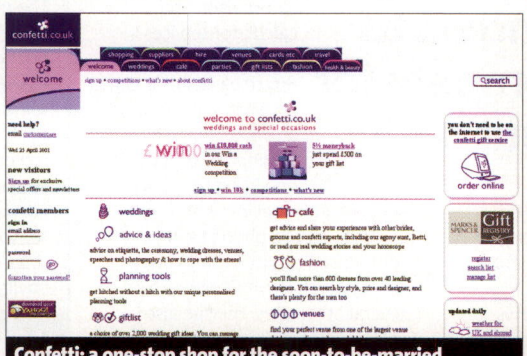
With a seemingly unending list of tasks to wade through when before you call up: would you have remembered Aunt Flora's fatal nut allergy before ordering the cake? As you'd expect, there are also channels for travel, fashion, health and beauty and organising parties. And as if that wasn't enough, there's a separate wedding channel chock-full of ideas and advice for the event itself, including a detailed explanation of all the traditional key roles at the wedding which even finds the parents of the groom something useful to do. The interactive tools are equally detailed: the wedding planner reminds you to encourage the father of the bride to think about his speech a month in advance; the budget planner is also monstrous, and checks you're being realistic about the cost of everything from the rings to the video of the day. You can order and control your whole gift list on the site, too. Just about everything you'll need to plan that special day, all under one roof...

@ If you have to bookmark one...

CONFETTI.CO.UK

www.confetti.co.uk ★★★★★

Weddings can be gargantuan affairs, both in terms of the event itself and its organisation, which makes Confetti.co.uk appropriately proportioned. The biggest wedding site in the UK, it's been giving away an amazing £10,000 to lucky couples for several months now; there's still the chance to win it if you enter before 30 June. But that's only a part of what it has to offer on its several packed channels. Here you'll find local search facilities for hundreds of hire companies, venues and suppliers of everything from discos to portable loos. There's even a prompt list to make sure you've thought of everything



Confetti: a one-stop shop for the soon-to-be-married

WORDS: ALEX NEWBY; PICTURES: CORBIS

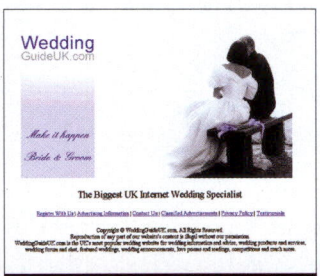
planning a wedding, you'll be grateful for the lack of clutter on this unassuming site. It offers straightforward advice on organising key parts of the big day, from choosing your ceremony to knowing the order of events at a traditional reception. It also usefully reminds you of traditional practices such as which partner's family is meant to pay for what, and a full list of duties of the Best Man and Chief Bridesmaid – both of which will help shed some of the load. Further reduce your efforts by using the wedding service and provider search tools. There are quickly digestible tips on budgeting and on guest and gift lists, plus a a check list of everything you'll need to do in the run up to your wedding. Grooms should definitely point the best men towards the helpful guide to writing and delivering that all-important speech.

WEDDING GUIDE UK

www.weddingguideuk.com

★★★★★

In terms of sheer quantity of advice and detail, this site is massive. The Information and Advice section contains over 50 in-depth articles on almost every aspect of getting married, from telling your children you're marrying to choosing the right flowers for the bridesmaids. Among the subject areas is a



WeddingGuideUK: useful countdown

collection of articles for the groom, which seems to leave no stone unturned, covering everything from a list of what you're meant to pay for to how to shave effectively for the big day. And the blow-by-blow account for the Best Man should ensure nothing can go wrong. But despite such a copious amount of content, the personable tone and design make this site manageable. Summaries of the long articles make it quick to navigate, and excellent directories and online shopping services come courtesy of Confetti and Web Weddings.

WEDDINGS.CO.UK

www.weddings.co.uk ★★★★

Behind its jolly home page, pages of text without illustrations make the presentation of this site a bit of a turn-off. But while the quality of the content is a little patchy – the love poems are rather dubious, as is the service and providers section – there are some hidden gems that make useful reading. For instance, couples thinking about marrying abroad will do well to start by checking the legal requirements of more than 20 countries. If you're having a church wedding and don't know how to pick a biblical reading, you'll find all the classics in the rather haphazard Articles and Information section. And couples worried about exceeding the budget should note that there's always the chance to boost funds by featuring on the programmes in the 'Appear on TV' section.

NET-WEDDINGS

www.net-weddings.co.uk ★★★

If you've ever wondered where some of those old wedding customs come from, Net-Weddings has an section devoted to explaining them. Here you can discover why brides are meant to wear something borrowed and something blue, and that brides and bridesmaids used to wear the same outfits in order to confuse evil spirits. There's quite an emphasis on tradition throught this site; the etiquette section is full of historical background on weddings, though it also provides guidelines to modern practices as well. On the whole, however, there's a lack of quantity and detail to the texts on this site, though there are still parts worth investigating: the health and beauty section is surprisingly helpful, offering sensible and affordable tips to make sure you look and feel good for the day, and there's also a free service allowing you to text-chat in real time with an advisor about any aspect of your wedding.

MATRIMONY MAMBO

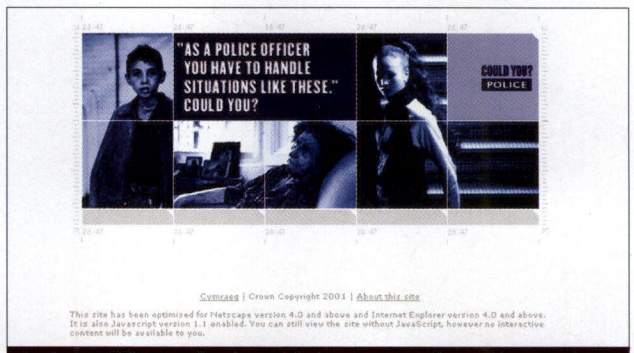
azcentral.webpoint.com/wedding

★★★★

Save hours trawling through magazines to find the style of dress you want; Matrimony Mambo has a superb interactive programme that allows you to design your own by choosing from a selection of necklines, sleeves and skirt shapes. Humour plays an important part in this US site, which encourages you to keep your cool when planning your wedding; even the dubious Wedding Therapist section turns out to be another excuse to offer amusing though level-headed solutions to common problems. The content isn't detailed, but there is useful advice and stressed-out couples may well be grateful for a lighter take on their daunting task.

@ CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials


"AS A POLICE OFFICER YOU HAVE TO HANDLE SITUATIONS LIKE THESE." COULD YOU?
COULD YOU? POLICE
Cymraeg | Crown Copyright 2001 | About this site
This site has been optimized for Netscape version 4.0 and above and Internet Explorer version 4.0 and above. It is also Javascript version 1.1 enabled. You can still view the site without JavaScript, however no interactive content will be available to you.

Check your ability to police the population at *www.policecouldyou.co.uk*

GOVERNMENT

10 Downing Street
www.number-10.gov.uk
Features the latest news and facts, and an opportunity to join a discussion forum. Don't miss the Webcam, which offers panoramic views of Downing Street.

Department of Health Website
www.doh.gov.uk
Read up on the Department's policies; also provides links to the latest health-related reports.

Scottish Parliament
www.thebabyregistry.co.uk
Up-to-the-minute news bulletins, and a chance to share your views .

National Assembly for Wales
www.wales.gov.uk
Features news, press releases, the latest policies, and links to other Welsh offices.

ROYALTY

The British Monarchy
www.royal.gov.uk
Find news on the royals past and present, photos and tour info.

The Royal Archive
royalarchive.com
Features news, biogs and a shop.

The Prince of Wales
www.princeofwales.gov.uk
News, galleries and a database of HRH's speeches.

Royal Families of the World
www.royalfamily.com
Provides links to both official and unofficial sites of monarchies all over the world.

RELIGION

Church Net UK
www.churchnet.org.uk
Database for Christian affairs in the UK and beyond. Includes news and comprehensive church and groups listings.

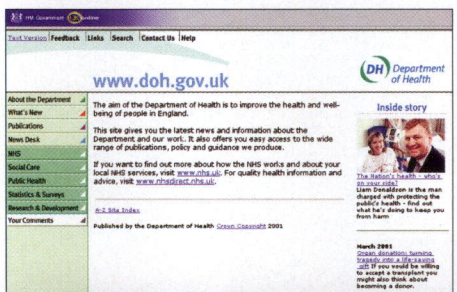
The Buddhist Society UK
www.buddsoc.org.uk
Features major Buddhist schools and traditions, and a list of books and courses.

Jewish.net
www.jewish.net
'The number one European destination for all things Jewish.'

Islam Direct
www.islamdirect.com
News, teachings and links to Muslim sites on the Web.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

London Fire Brigade
www.london-fire.gov.uk
With safety tips and photos.



Keep tabs on the DoH for the good of your health

Police
www.policecouldyou.co.uk
Recruitment site, with local links.

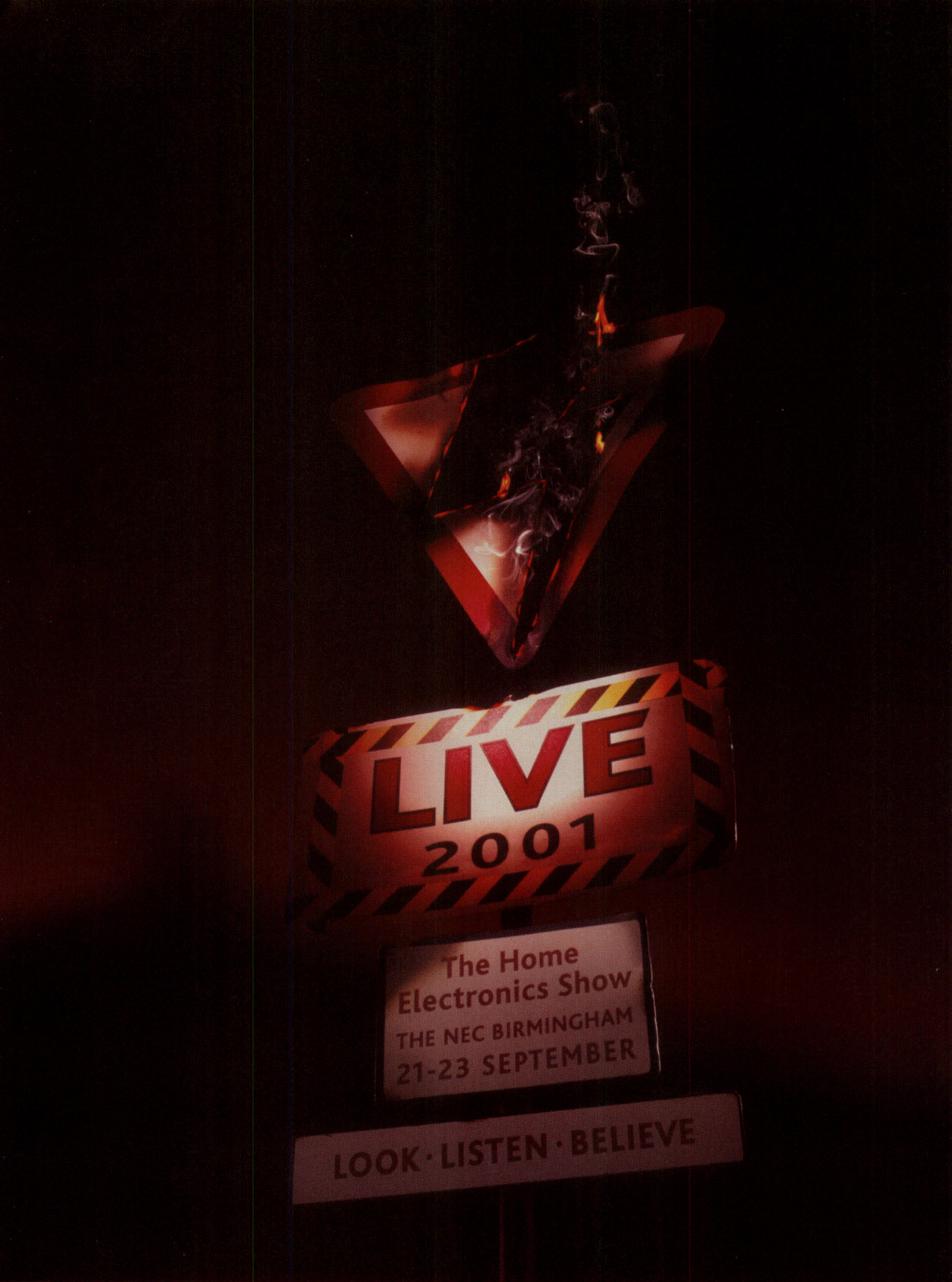
NEWSGROUP

soc.couples.wedding
Get advice and support for your big day with other soon-to-be-married couples.

MAILING LIST

Join an international weddings mailing list specifically for brides by clicking on ***www.world-wideweddings.com***.

NEED MORE? **Hundreds of addresses** The Directory p78



WANT TO KNOW MORE CALL 020 8307 2300

COME AND MEET US!

Want advice straight from the experts? Come and talk to us at Live 2001

The Internet has moved fast. In just a few years, it has transformed from an exclusive club presenting ugly, plain text pages to the fun-packed, fully interactive adventure we all know today. And it keeps changing by the minute, placing new demands on your connection, your software and your knowhow.

Which is why we're offering a free advice service to visitors at Live 2001, the UK's biggest consumer electronics show, to be held at Birmingham's NEC between 21 and 23 September. Come along and *the net* team will be on hand every day to solve your problems – be it choosing the right ISP, deciding whether to go broadband, or simply ensuring the software handling your browsing and email is the best it can be.

And while you're at the show, you can catch up on a host of other new technologies. This year sees the launch of the always-on mobile Internet in the form of GPRS; manufacturers are unveiling a wealth of next-generation handsets, and most of the operators are rolling out new GPRS pricing packages (BT has already announced its pricing for the service – others will soon follow).

The service promises Internet heaven: forget WAP and its tedious dial-up process, slow connection and poor presentation – with GPRS, email and rich Web pages are only a click away. Or at least that's the promise: come and judge for yourself at Live.

Meanwhile, the growth in broadband has fuelled interest in online gaming, and soon Sony and Microsoft are to go head-to-head in cyberspace, Sony with its online facility for PlayStation 2 and Microsoft with the launch of X-Box. Sega has withdrawn from console manufacturer and concentrated instead on what it does best: involving, exciting games. Visit Live and get the complete low-down on the online gaming world first hand.

Aside from *the net*, you'll also find stands dedicated to our sister publications, *Stuff* and *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision*. Featuring the hottest new gadgets for the discerning male, *Stuff* will be showcasing its newly announced Awards at the Show, which promise to range from must-have PDAs to drop-dead gorgeous laptops. *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision*, meanwhile, will be on hand to give advice on choosing and buying your hi-fi and surround sound systems, as well as giving state-of-the-art demonstrations of new products on their stand.

If you want to check how to get to the NEC or just want a list of the latest exhibitors, visit the Live 2001 site at ***www.livExpo.co.uk***.

Get your advice from the magazine with the answers – be sure to put 21-23 September in your diary now.

FOCUS:// Computing skills

Be a computer whizz in minutes

PC wizardry is a tricky business: fortunately, help is at hand with online tuition

Don't be tempted to take the easy way out...

WEBMONKEY

hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey

★★★★★

Webmonkey is an absolute godsend to the wannabe Web designer. Here you can get free tutorials and brush up your skills on a number of topics from basic HTML and Photoshop right through to Java Script and Cold Fusion for getting a database online. There's something for everybody here, whether you're thinking about designing your first home page, or looking to start an online store.

Once part of the excellent Wired site, Webmonkey is now run by Lycos, but very little seems to have changed; it's very easy to navigate and find what you're looking for, and the tutorials are first rate. But what really appeals about this site is its approach to learning complicated technical skills in a fun manner – yes, Java can be fun when you really get into it. Apparently. And you can also subscribe to the Elbow Grease thrice-weekly newsletter, which keeps you up to date with updates and add-ons on all your favourite programs.

ABOUT COMPUTING

home.about.com/compute

★★★★★

The only stumbling block to improving your computer skills through this comprehensive Web site is that it's a little bit *too* comprehensive, and therefore slightly tricky to get to where you want. The sheer weight of informative articles can be overwhelming at first, but getting to grips with the site is a matter of browsing around and finding what you want. But once you work your way through the hordes of – in this case – surplus information, oh boy, you've struck gold. Ignoring the plethora of Web design tutorials available, let's pick another computer topic at random, say desktop processing. About offers a great free course in DTP, which you can either work through on your own, or else register with the site – still free! – and submit work to be marked and receive a certificate on completion. Genius.

LEARN THAT

www.learnthat.com ★★★★

Worried about Windows? Flustered by Flash? Or even perturbed by Perl? If these or any of a hundred computing conundrums inbetween sound familiar, then Learn That is the place to come. Many of the courses are refreshingly entry-level, such as how to use the basic features in Microsoft Word, while others get slightly trickier – don't think about attempting the Introduction to Linux until you're well up to speed with Windows. You're not limited to computing courses either: you can learn anything from how to play the guitar to being successful in romance or making great salsa. We kid you not.

COMPUTERS OF TOMORROW

www.computersoftomorrow.com

★★★★

This site's slogan is 'Let us build your future today', and if you're interested in making headway in the world of Information Technology it's a great place to come. Let's face it, so many jobs now rely on some kind of computing knowledge that we all need to know a little bit about the subject, and if you've boosted

@ If you have to bookmark one...

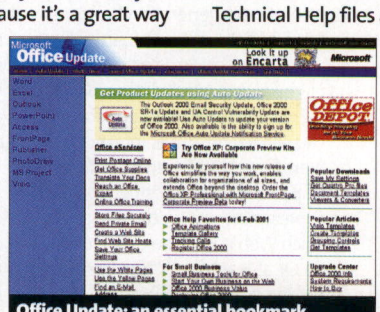
MICROSOFT OFFICE UPDATE

officeupdate.microsoft.com ★★★★★

If you use Microsoft programs, and let's face it very few of us don't, then this site should already be saved to your Favourites. If not, shame on you, because it's a great way to find out about getting the most from your software. Also, as many people who buy a new PC get some version of Office or Works included, you can save forking out extra money for manuals by making this a port of call instead.

All you need to do is click on your chosen application from the menu on the left-hand side – including firm favourites Word, Publisher, Excel, Access and the all-powerful but often underused Outlook – and select Assistance. From here you have a host of choices for aiding your program proficiency. Under the Articles link you can choose from a selection of step-by-step guides to getting the most out of the program. For example, with Word you can work your way through a range of topics including Creating and Sending a Fax – now a paper-free experience thanks to the Net – and Formatting Tables for the Web in Word. There are also a number of Technical Help files and if you're just browsing a bunch of short Tips and Tricks. As an added bonus there are links to hundreds of templates for each product and lists of newsgroups if you require further free help on any subject.

At the end of the process you can even judge the article on whether or not it was useful to you, allowing the bods who maintain the site to meet their client's needs. Say goodbye to the annoying paperclip help forever. Hurrah!



Office Update: an essential bookmark

WORDS: SHAUN MARIN ; PICTURES: KOBAL COLLECTION

Webmonkey: it's easy to find the top notch tutorials on offer here

your CV somewhat, then a quick course wouldn't go amiss before you start your new job.

For home users this site also has a helpful selection of tips on maintaining and cleaning your computer, a task many people overlook to their eventual cost. The free courses are available online, or you can choose to download many of them in PDF format, so you can print them out and study them at an appropriate time. Such as when the boss isn't looking.

LINDA'S COMPUTER STOP

www.personal-computer-tutor.com ★★★

While Linda's place (called the Personal Computer Tutor until the

Computers Of Tomorrow: useful

owners of that trademark took umbrage) looks less business-like than many of the other tutorial sites out there, it's still well worth checking out. Instead of the set tutorials of other sites, the onus here is very much on browsing a bit and picking up the odd tip. This works more effectively than you might expect, and returning regularly you'll soon be able to pick up a selection of shortcuts and tips for Windows and Microsoft Office applications, which will mark you out as something of an expert. These include how to move your Contacts file to another computer – which is very useful for taking your valuable information with you when you change jobs...

MALEK TIPS

malektips.com ★★★

If you're desperate to improve your computing skills you'll be chuffed to learn that Malek Tips adds new hints on a daily basis. These cover everything from operating systems to Web design to software such as Microsoft Word. There's little in the way of comprehensive courses here, so don't expect a full rundown of how to use a program, but once you're heading towards proficiency, these tips will serve you well. You can even send your own tips in if you have any.

KRUISER'S TIPS & TRICKS

www.geocities.com/kruiser59/tipsandtricks1.html ★★★

This site is a portal with links to hundreds of other sites offering computer support, tips and tricks on a variety of software and hardware. Most of the links are to the official product support sites – which you may well know already – but as these are a great repository of working tips and tricks that's no problem. Whether you're stuck with Word, baffled by HTML or having trouble accessing your hard drive, the chances are you'll find the solution here.

5 STAR SUPPORT

www.5starsupport.com ★★★★

While the main job of this well-executed Web site is to provide online support for common computer problems, it also has an impressive range of tips, tricks and full-on tutorials to help improve your computing skills. These kick off with a Beginner's Guide to all things computing, directions for cleaning your mouse and work their way up to tutorials on how to install a graphics card. If you're looking for something a little bit more technical than how to format a Word document, then this site is well worth a browse.

@CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials

QUOTATIONS AND PROVERBS

Bartleby.com
www.bartleby.com
Spice up your essays with a quote.

Famous Quotations Network
www.famous-quotations.com
Search for quotations by country or author.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS

Webopedia
www.pcwebopedia.com
Specialises in IT topics.

Online Dictionaries, Glossaries and Encyclopedias
stommel.tamu.edu/~baum/hyperref.html
Large list of online resources.

FunkandWagnalls.com
www.funkandwagnalls.com
Selection of historical articles and a perspective on modern events.

EXAM RESOURCES

Topmarks Education
www.topmarks.co.uk
Help with hundreds of topics.

revisiontime.com
www.revisiontime.com
Helpful links on various subjects.

Learn.co.uk
www.learn.co.uk
Useful tips for five- to 19-year-olds.

S-Cool!
www.s-cool.co.uk
Provides revision material for GCSE and A-level students.

Schoolnet
www.schoolsnet.com
Award-winning education site for students, parents and teachers.

DISTANCE LEARNING

The Open University
www-icdl.open.ac.uk
The Open University on the Net.

Tele-School Online
www.tele-school.org
Learn online and interact, too.

CONVERTERS AND SYMBOLS

MegaConverter 2
www.megaconverter.com/mega2
Convert from just about anything to anything else.

Symbols.com
www.symbols.com
Online list of graphic symbols.

PICK UP A USEFUL SKILL

Learnfree.com
www.learnfree.com
Features RealVideo tutorials.

LEARN AN INSTRUMENT

Piano World
www.pianoworld.com
Tickle those ivories like a pro.

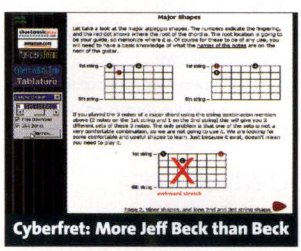
Cyberfret.com
www.cyberfret.com
'Online college of guitar wisdom'.

NEWSGROUP

comp.edu
Advanced help on those tricky computer-related subjects.

MAILING LIST

Brush up on your Windows skills – join at ***www.bigfoot.com/~windowstips/***



Cyberfret: More Jeff Beck than Beck

Funk and Wagnalls: Silly name, but a great online encyclopedia

NEED MORE? **Useful addresses for kids** The Directory p78

The Directory

Welcome to our exclusive compendium of those top Internet sites you'll need time and again

<BANKING>
Online banks
Abbey National
www.abbeynational.co.uk
Alliance & Leicester
www.alliance-leicester.co.uk
Barclays ***www.barclays.co.uk***
Co-operative Bank
www.co-operativebank.co.uk
Direct Line ***www.directline.com***
Egg ***www.egg.co.uk***
First Direct ***www.firstdirect.co.uk***
First-e ***www.first-e.com***
Halifax ***www.halifax-online.co.uk***
HSBC ***www.banking.hsbc.co.uk***
Lloyds TSB ***www.lloydstsb.co.uk***
Nationwide ***www.nationwide.co.uk***
Natwest ***www.natwest.com***
Royal Bank Of Scotland
www.royalbankscot.co.uk
Smile ***www.smile.co.uk***
Virgin Direct ***www.virgin-direct.co.uk***

<CLASSIFIEDS>
Ad-Mart ***www.ad-mart.co.uk***
Economist Classifieds Market Place
www.classified.economist.com
Eureka-net ***www.eureka-net.co.uk***
Free Classified
www.freeclassified.co.uk
itsbazaar.com ***www.itsbazaar.com***
JJ Electronic Plaza Classifieds
www.jjplaza.com/onlinead
Localads ***www.localads.net***
London's Classifieds
www.mercurie.co.uk/londonclassified
LOOT ***www.loot.com***
netTRADER ***www.nettrader.co.uk***
PhotoAds ***www.photoads.co.uk***
Sellitnet ***www.sellitnet.com***

<DOWNLOADS>
Apple ***asu.info.apple.com***
Download Net ***www.download.net***
Download Warehouse
www.downloadwarehouse.com
Freeware ***www.freewarehome.com***
ICQ ***www.icq.com***
Memoware ***www.memoware.com***
Microsoft ***www.microsoft.com***
Real Player ***www.real.com***
Shareware ***www.download.com***
Shockwave ***www.shockwave.com***
ZDNet ***www.hotfiles.com***

<ENCYCLOPEDIAS>
Encarta ***encarta.msn.com***
Encyclopedia Britannica
www.britannica.com
Encyclopedia.com
www.encyclopedia.com
Funk and Wagnalls
www.funkandwagnalls.com
Illustrated Library
www.illustratedlibrary.com

SOCIETY NEW ENTRY

BE ALL YOU CAN BE

The award-winning BEME.com, an all-encompassing women's portal, has just undergone a radical relaunch in response to a major research project conducted to define its core user. Discovering that the majority of its visitors were women between the ages of 25 and 30 who had a high disposable income, BEME decided to redirect their site to suit. The changes include a select number of channels, ranging from news and entertainment to fashion and travel. 'The new design will help us showcase the best content for women on the Net,' explained BEME.com's executive editor Eleni Kyriacou.

All of the channels are easily accessible from the home page. The design is clear and the response is quick, and information is updated continually. We especially like the 'Today's Tip' in the health section and the light-hearted celeb gossip on the entertainment channel.

Sign up with BEME.com to get a free email address, organiser and personal horoscope. ***www.beme.com***

<FOOD & DRINK>
Decanter.com ***www.decanter.com***
Meals For You ***www.mealsforyou.com***
RecipeWeb.co.uk
www.recipeweb.co.uk
Restaurants.co.uk
www.restaurants.co.uk
RoomService ***www.roomservice.co.uk***
Sainsbury's ***www.tasteforlife.co.uk***
squaremeal.co.uk
www.squaremeal.co.uk
Tesco ***www.tesco.com***
Toptable ***www.toptable.co.uk***
Uncorked ***www.uncorked.co.uk***

<GAMES>
Guides & companies
Dreamcast ***www.dreamcast.com***
Future Games Network
www.fgnetwork.com
GameCenter ***www.gamecenter.com***
Gamers.com ***www.gamers.com***
GameSpot ***www.gamespot.com***
GameSpyder ***www.gamespyder.com***
GameStats ***www.gamestats.com***
MacGaming
www.maccentral.com/games
MultiPlayer ***www.multiplayer.com***
Nintendo ***www.nintendo.com***
PlayStation ***www.playstation.com***
Sega ***www.sega-europe.com***
Total Video Games
www.totalvideogames.com

<GENEALOGY>
British Ancestral Research
www.brit-a-r.demon.co.uk
British Heraldic Institute
www.kwtelecom.com/heraldry
Family Search ***www.familysearch.com***
Geneaology Research Source
www.geneaology.bookpub.net
Public Record Office ***www.pro.gov.uk***

<GOVERNMENT>
Britain
Arts Council ***www.artscouncil.org.uk***
British Monarchy ***www.royal.gov.uk***
Department for Culture, Media and Sport ***www.culture.gov.uk***
Dept of Health ***www.doh.gov.uk***
Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions
www.detr.gov.uk
Downing St ***www.number-10.gov.uk***
Ministry of Defence ***www.mod.uk***
Open.gov.uk ***www.open.gov.uk***
Scottish Parliament
www.scotland.gov.uk
Welsh Assembly ***www.wales.gov.uk***

The World
China ***www.gov.cn***
European Commission ***europa.eu.int***
France ***www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr***
Germany ***www.bundesregierung.de***
Russia ***www.gov.ru***
United Nations ***www.un.org***
United States ***www.whitehouse.gov***

<HEALTH>
Doctors & diagnosis
Ask Dr Weil ***cgi.pathfinder.com/drweil***
Ask The Doc ***www.ask-the-doc.com***
BackCare ***www.backpain.org***
British Dental Association
www.bda-dentistry.org.uk
British Medical Journal ***www.bmj.com***
The Brompton Dental Clinic
www.mercuryfree.co.uk
Healthy Ideas ***www.healthyideas.com***
MedRef ***www.medscout.com***
Mental Health
www.mentalhealth.com

WORDS: JENNIFER KEARNS

NetDoctor ***www.netdoctor.co.uk***
Patient ***www.patient.co.uk***
Pharma-Lexicon.com
www.pharma-lexicon.com
Pocket Doctor
www.pocketdoctor.co.uk

Support & information

Alzheimer's Disease Society
www.alzheimers.org.uk
CancerBACUP
www.cancerbacup.org.uk
Diabetes UK ***www.diabetic.org.uk***
Fitness Online ***www.fitnessonline.com***
HIV/AIDS ***www.brad.ac.uk/staff/ijhodgson/hivlinks.htm***
National Meningitis Trust
www.meningitis-trust.org.uk
Natural Naturally
www.naturalnaturally.com
ThinkNatural.com
www.thinknatural.com

<HOMES>

Estate agents

Bushells ***www.bushells.com***
Chancellors ***www.chancellors.co.uk***
CityLet ***www.citylet.com***
Cluttons Daniel Smith
www.cluttons.com
Foxtons ***www.foxtons.co.uk***
Friend & Falcke
www.friendandfalcke.co.uk
Goldschmidt Howland
www.goldschmidt-howland.co.uk
Hamptons ***www.hamptons.co.uk***
John D.Wood ***www.johndwood.co.uk***
Knight Frank ***www.knightfrank.co.uk***
Strutt & Parker
www.struttandparker.co.uk
UK Property Gold ***www.ukpg.co.uk***
Your Move ***www.your-move.co.uk***

Property finders

Accommodation Directory
www.accommodation.com
Assertahome ***www.assertahome.com***
Bamboo Avenue
www.bambooavenue.com
BBC Good Homes
www.goodhomes.beeb.com
Easier.co.uk ***www.easier.co.uk***
Edinburgh Solicitors Property Centre
www.espc.co.uk
Global Resident
www.globalresident.com
Homefile UK ***www.homefileuk.co.uk***
Home Free Home
www.homefreehome.co.uk
Homepages ***www.homepages.co.uk***
Home Sale ***www.home-sale.co.uk***
Home to Home
www.home-to-home.co.uk
HouseNet ***www.housenet.co.uk***
Internet Property Finder
www.propertyfinder.co.uk
Lets Direct ***www.letsdirect.co.uk***
Move.co.uk ***www.move.co.uk***
Pavilions of Splendour
www.heritage.co.uk
Property Sight
www.property-sight.co.uk
Property World
www.propertyworld.com
Propwatch ***www.propwatch.com***

<HUMOUR>

Comedy Online
www.comedyonline.co.uk
Comics.com ***www.comics.com***
Comedy Zone ***www.comedy-zone.net***
Funplanet ***www.funplanet.co.uk***
Funny ***www.funny.co.uk***
HaHaBonk ***www.hahabonk.com***
JokeDepot ***www.jokedepot.com***
JokePost ***www.jokepost.com***
Jongleurs ***www.jongleurs.com***
SoYouWanna ***www.soyouwanna.com***
The Onion ***www.theonion.com***
TV Go Home ***www.tvgohome.com***
Uproar ***www.uproar.com***

<JOBS>

Employment Agencies

Agency Central
www.agencycentral.co.uk
Brook Street ***www.brookstreet.co.uk***
Independent Appointments
www.indappts.co.uk
Manpower ***www.manpower.co.uk***
Reed ***www.reed.co.uk***

Job searches

Brilliant Careers
brilliantcareers.channel4.com
Easy-Jobs ***www.easy-jobs.co.uk***
Expat Network
www.expatnetwork.co.uk
Fish4Jobs ***www.fish4jobs.co.uk***
Gradunet ***www.gradunet.co.uk***
Guardian Unlimited Jobs
jobs.guardian.co.uk
Jobsearch UK ***www.jobsearch.co.uk***
Jobsin ***www.jobsin.co.uk***
Jobsite ***www.jobsite.co.uk***
Overseas Jobs ***www.overseasjobs.com***
Personnelnet ***www.personnelnet.com***
Stepstone ***www.stepstone.co.uk***
Totaljobs ***www.totaljobs.com***
TV Jobshop ***www.tv-jobshop.com***
Wide Eyes ***www.wideyes.com***
Yelcom Ltd ***www.yelcom.com***

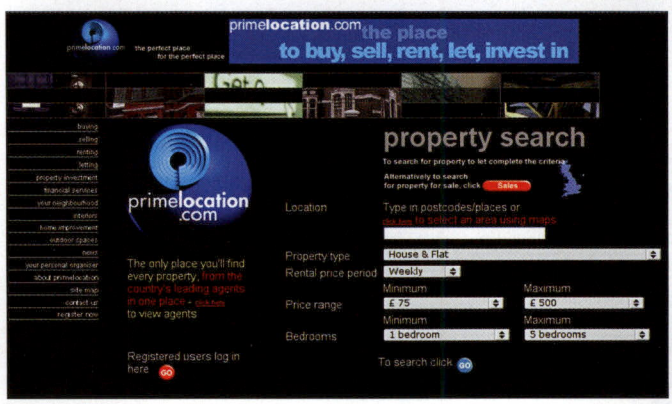
<KIDS>

0-8

Babynames.com
www.babynames.com
Babyzone ***www.babyzone.com***
Cartoon Network
www.cartoonnetwork.co.uk
CITV ***www.citv.co.uk***
Diggit ***www.diggit.co.uk***
Fox Kids ***www.foxkids.co.uk***
FunSchool ***www.funschool.com***
Kidscom ***www.kidscom.com/orakc/Mousers/mouse.html***
Mother & Baby Magazine
www.motherandbaby.co.uk
Nickelodeon ***www.nickjr.com***
Sesame Street
www.sesamestreet.com/preschool

8 plus

AJ Kids ***www.ajkids.com***
Anything!Student
www.anythingstudent.com
Atkidz.com ***www.atkidz.com***
BJ Pinchbeck Homework Helper
www.bjpinchbeck.com
ChildU ***www.childu.com***
Disney.co.uk ***www.disney.co.uk***
EduWeb ***www.eduweb.co.uk***
Family Education
www.familyeducation.com
The History Channel
www.historystudystop.co.uk
MatMice ***www.matmice.com***
Paw Island ***www.pawisland.com***
Pupiline.net ***www.pupiline.net***
S-Cool! ***www.s-cool.co.uk***



HOMES NEW ENTRY

SURF FOR A NEW SETTLEMENT

Whether you're looking to buy, sell, rent or let a property, Primelocation.com could make the process trouble-free. Launched this April, the site exclusively houses the property lists of over 230 of the UK's leading estate agents. Additionally, users can benefit from Primelocation.com's information on mortgages, legal services and neighbourhoods. There's even a link to Leapingsalmon.com's food delivery service (***www.leapingsalmon.com***) – perfect for when you've yet to unpack the kitchenware boxes.

Primelocation claim to have over 10 billion pounds' worth of residential property online. With figures like that, anyone looking to move house should find a new nest here.
www.primelocation.com

StudentUK: for the career crossroads

StudentUK ***www.studentuk.com***
SurfMonkey ***www.surfmonkey.com***
Teen Advice ***www.teenadvice.net***
Teen Scene ***www.teen-scene.com***
Thunk ***www.thunk.com***
Wizziwiz.co.uk ***www.wizziwiz.co.uk***
Yahooligans ***www.yahooligans.com***

<LAW>

Desktop Lawyer
www.desktoplawyer.freeserve.net
Divorce Online
www.divorce-online.co.uk
Law Assure ***www.lawassure.co.uk***
Law Rights ***www.lawright.co.uk***
Law Solutions ***www.lawsolutions.co.uk***
Legaldocs ***www.legaldocs.com***
UK Law Online
www.leeds.ac.uk/law/hamlyn

<MAGAZINES>

Online mags

Foocha! ***www.foocha.com***
Garbled Communications UK
www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Show/1322
Salon.com ***www.salon.com***
Seven ***www.sevenmag.com***
Slate ***www.slate.com***
Suck ***www.suck.com***

<MOBILES>

Top Networks

BT Cellnet ***www.btcellnet.net***
One 2 One ***www.one2one.co.uk***
Orange ***www.orange.co.uk***
Virgin ***www.virginmobile.com***
Vodafone ***www.vodafone.co.uk***

Ringtones & Logos

a2bwap ***www.a2bwap.com***
Be Mobile ***www.yellphone.com***
Jippii! ***www.jippii.co.uk***
MonsterMob ***www.monstermob.com***
Ringtones Online
www.ringtones.co.uk
tones4fones ***www.tones4fones.com***
YourMobile ***www.yourmobile.com***

<MONEY>

Financial & investment guides

Citywire ***www.citywire.co.uk***
DigitalLook.com ***www.digitallook.com***
Eye4Money ***www.eye4money.com***
Financial Times ***www.ft.com***
Interactive Investor ***www.iii.co.uk***
Money Unlimited
www.moneyunlimited.co.uk
Motley Fool ***www.fool.co.uk***
Sharepages ***www.sharepages.com***
Stocktrade ***www.stocktrade.co.uk***
TaxAssist Direct Ltd
www.taxassist.co.uk »

<MOTORING>
Car manufacturers
Audi ***www.audi.co.uk***
BMW ***www.bmw.co.uk***
Citroen ***www.citroen.co.uk***
Ferrari ***www.ferrari.it***
Fiat ***www.fiat.co.uk***
Ford ***www.ford.co.uk***
Honda ***www.honda.co.uk***
Jaguar ***www.jaguarcars.com***
Lotus ***www.lotuscars.co.uk***
Mazda ***www.mazda.co.uk***
Mercedes-Benz ***www.mercedes-benz.co.uk***
Nissan ***www.nissan-europe.com***
Peugeot ***www.peugeot.co.uk***
Porsche ***www.porsche.co.uk***
Rover ***www.rover.co.uk***
Toyota ***www.toyota.co.uk***
Volkswagen ***www.volkswagen.co.uk***
Volvo ***www.volvocars.volvo.co.uk***

<MUSEUMS & GALLERIES>
Imperial War Museum ***www.iwm.org.uk***
National Gallery ***www.nationalgallery.org.uk***
Natural History Museum ***www.nhm.ac.uk***
Tate Gallery ***www.tate.org.uk***

<MUSIC>
Artists, DJs & radio
The Beatles ***beatles.com***
Britney Spears ***www.britneyspears.com***
David Bowie ***www.davidbowie.com***
Eminem ***www.eminem2000.com***
Geri Halliwell ***www.geri-halliwell.com***
Gilles Peterson ***gpww.iscool.net***
Gorillaz ***www.gorillaz.com***
Hear'say ***www.popstarsuk.fzs.com***
Radiohead ***www.radiohead.com***
REM ***www.remhq.com***
Vdance ***www.vdance.co.uk***
WOD1.com ***www.wod1.com***
U2 ***www.u2.com***

MP3
BeSonic ***www.besonic.com***
Brand New Music ***www.brandnewmusic.com***
Clickmusic ***www.clickmusic.co.uk***
Crunch ***www.crunch.co.uk***
Getsigned.com ***www.get-signed.com***
Mp3.com ***www.mp3.com***
Popwire ***www.popwire.com***
Vitaminic ***www.vitaminic.co.uk***

Online mixing
DJSounds.com ***www.djsounds.com***
eJay ***www.ejay.com***
Getoutthere ***www.getoutthere.bt.com***
Hitsquad ***www.hitsquad.com***
Home Recording ***www.homerecording.com***
Mouse Jam ***www.mousejam.com***
Online DJ ***www.onlinedj.com***
Scratch It ***www.turntable.de***
SS7X7 ***www.ss7x7.com***
Turntables ***www.turntables.de***

<NEWS>
Newspapers
Daily Telegraph ***www.telegraph.co.uk***
Guardian Unlimited ***www.guardian.co.uk***
The Independent ***www.independent.co.uk***
MegaStar ***www.megastar.co.uk***
The Mirror ***www.mirror.co.uk***
News Of The World ***www.notw.co.uk***
Scotsman ***www.thescotsman.co.uk***
The Sun ***www.thesun.co.uk***
The Times ***www.the-times.co.uk***

News services
ABC News ***www.abcnews.go.com***
BBC ***news.bbc.co.uk***
CNN ***www.cnn.co.uk***
ITN ***www.itn.co.uk***
NewsNow ***www.newsnow.co.uk***
PA News ***www.pa.press.net***
Reuters ***www.reuters.com/news***

<PEOPLE FINDERS>
Email addresses
Bigfoot ***bigfoot.com***
EmailFinder ***www.emailfinder.com***
Friends Reunited ***www.friendsreunited.co.uk***
People Site ***www.peoplesite.com***
WhoWhere ***www.whowhere.com***
Yahoo ***people.yahoo.com***

Phone numbers
BT Directory Enquiries ***www.bt.co.uk/phonenetuk***
Thomson Directories ***www.thomweb.co.uk***
Yellow Pages ***www.yell.co.uk***

MUSIC NEW ENTRY

GET INTO THE GROOVE

Dance site Groovetech has had quite a revamp, and now offers music lovers around the world the chance to download streaming DJ broadcasts and buy tunes online. 'After years of relentless change and refinement to our old Web site,' explained Groovetech co-founder Jon Cunningham, 'it was time to construct a new system from the ground up.'

Launched in 1996 as an events source in Seattle, Washington, Groovetech then added the option to buy music online in 1999. The updated version also allows users to download the 3000-plus broadcast archives as well. And, despite all that's happening online, Groovetech remains a cinch to use. 'Our thinking has always been to keep the site simple and let the music speak for itself,' continues Cunningham. 'I believe we've taken that philosophy to a new level with this site.'

Why not show your support for Groovetech by buying one of their t-shirts; alternatively, post a message on the site to meet other dance addicts. While you're chatting (if you live in London, Seattle or San Francisco), tune into Groovetech's live DJ sets. ***www.groovetech.com***

<SCIENCE>
News & updates
BBC Science ***news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/sci/tech/default.htm***
einstein.tv ***www.einstein.tv***
Eureka Alert ***www.eurekalert.org***
NASA ***science.nasa.gov***
New Scientist ***www.newscientist.com***
WhyFiles ***whyfiles.news.wisc.edu***

<SEARCH ENGINES>
AltaVista ***www.altavista.digital.com***
Ask Jeeves ***www.askjeeves.com***
Dogpile ***www.dogpile.com***
Electric Library ***www.elibrary.com***
FAST ***alltheweb.com***
Google ***www.google.com***
HotBot ***www.hotbot.com***
Inter-Change ***www.inter-change.com***
Lycos ***www.lycos.com***
MetaCrawler ***www.metacrawler.com***
Mirago ***www.mirago.co.uk***
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<SHOPPING>
Online auctions
Auction Hunter ***www.auctionhunter.com***
Auction Universe ***www.auctionuniverse.co.uk***
Bid4sport ***www.bid4sport.co.uk***
eBay ***www.ebay.co.uk***
eBid ***www.ebid.co.uk***
eSwap ***www.eswap.co.uk***
Eurobid ***www.eurobid.com***
Last Minute ***www.lastminute.com***
QXL ***www.qxl.com***
What Am I Bid? ***www.whatamibid.com***

Shopping directories
Best of British ***www.bestofbritish.com***
BritishShopping.com ***www.british-shopping.com***
Centreshop ***www.centreshop.com***
CleverPants ***www.cleverpants.com***
Coppernob Shopping.com ***www.coppernobshopping.com***
Cotswold Essential Outdoor ***www.cotswold-outdoor.com***
Crocus ***www.crocus.co.uk***
eDirectory ***www.edirectory.co.uk***
The Gift Delivery Company ***www.giftdeliveryco.com***
Glasses-On-The-Web.Com ***www.glasses-on-the-web.com***
IMRG ***shops.imrg.org***
Inshop.co.uk ***www.inshop.co.uk***
Internet Shopping ***www.internetshopping.com***
Island Trading ***www.island-trading.com***
Crocus ***www.crocus.co.uk***

LuxLook.com ***www.luxlook.com***
ShopGuide ***www.shopguide.co.uk***
Shoppers Universe ***shoppersuniverse.com***
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ShopSmart ***www.shopsmart.com***
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Shop Tour UK ***www.shoptour.co.uk***
Splendour.com ***www.splendour.com***
TopUKWebsites ***www.topukwebsites.com***
Shopping Zone ***ukshoppingzone.co.uk***
Virgin Net ***www.virgin.net/shopping***
Virtual Mall ***www.thevirtualmall.co.uk***
ValueMad ***www.valuemad.com***
Wedding List ***www.wedding.co.uk***

<SOCIETY & FASHION>

Ammo City ***www.ammocity.com***
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BetterPlanet ***www.care4free.net/greenlife***
Boxfresh ***www.boxfresh.co.uk***
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Defining Edge ***www.definingedge.com***
Fotango ***www.fotango.com***
Fashion And Beauty Internet Association ***www.fbia.com***
Fashionfile ***www.fashionfile.com***
Fashion Mall ***www.fashionmall.com***
FashionNet ***www.fashion.net***
Lifebyte ***www.lifebyte.com***
Models.com ***www.models.com***
TheRumour ***www.therumour.com***
Salonweb ***www.salonweb.com***
Style Experts ***www.stylexperts.com***
Vogue ***www.vogue.com***
WooWho ***www.woowho.co.uk***

<SPORT>

FA Premiership clubs

Arsenal ***www.arsenal.co.uk***
Aston Villa ***www.astonvilla-fc.co.uk***
Bradford City ***www.bradfordcityfc.co.uk***
Charlton Athletic ***www.charlton-athletic.co.uk***
Chelsea ***www.chelseafc.co.uk***
Coventry City ***www.ccfc.co.uk***
Derby County ***www.dcfc.co.uk***
Everton ***www.evertonfc.com***
Ipswich Town ***www.itfc.co.uk***
Leeds United ***www.lufc.co.uk***
Leicester City ***www.lcfc.co.uk***
Liverpool ***www.liverpoolfc.net***
Manchester City ***www.mcfc.co.uk***
Manchester United ***www.manutd.com***
Middlesbrough ***www.mfc.co.uk***
Newcastle United ***www.nufc.co.uk***
Southampton ***www.saintsfc.co.uk/index.htm***
Sunderland ***www.sunderland-afc.com***
Tottenham Hotspur ***www.spurs.co.uk***
West Ham Utd ***www.whufc.co.uk***

Sport A-Z

Athletics ***www.nuff-respect.co.uk***
Autosport ***www.autosport.com***
Cricket ***www.cricket4.com***
Cycling ***www.cycleweb.co.uk***
Fishing ***www.anglersnet.co.uk***
Football ***www.football365.com***
Formula One ***www.itv-f1.com***
Golf ***www.golfweb.com***
Greyhound Racing ***www.wimbledonstadium.co.uk***
Hockey ***www.fieldhockey.com***
Martial Arts ***www.martial-arts-network.com***
Motorsport ***www.autosport.com***
Motorbike Racing ***www.motograndprix.com***
Racing ***www.racingpost.co.uk***
Rugby League ***www.rleague.com***
Rugby Union ***www.scrum.com***
Snooker ***www.snookernet.com***
Tennis ***www.tennis.com***
Wrestling ***www.wwf.com***

<TELEVISION>

Top shows

Brookside ***www.brookie.com***
Coronation Street ***www.corrie.net***
EastEnders ***www.bbc.co.uk/eastenders***
Friends ***friends.warnerbros.com***
Hollyoaks ***www.hollyoaks.com***
Neighbours ***www.neighbours.com***

TV companies

BBC ***www.bbc.co.uk***
Channel Four ***www.channel4.co.uk***
Channel Five ***www.channel5.co.uk***
E4 ***www.e4.com***
ITV ***www.itv.co.uk***
ONdigital ***www.ondigital.co.uk***
Sky ***www.sky.co.uk***

<TRAVEL>

Airlines

Air Canada ***www.aircanada.ca***
Air France ***www.airfrance.com***
American Airlines ***www.aa.com***
Britannia ***www.britanniaairways.com***
BA ***www.british-airways.com***
BM ***www.iflybritishmidland.com***
Buzz ***www.buzzaway.com***
Continental ***www.flycontinental.com***
easyJet ***www.easyjet.com***
Go ***www.go-fly.com***
Iberia ***www.iberia.com***
KLM ***www.klmuk.com***
Lufthansa ***www.lufthansa.com***
Qantas ***www.qantas.com.au***
Ryanair.com ***www.ryanair.com***
United Airlines ***www.ual.com***
Virgin Atlantic Airways ***www.virgin-atlantic.co.uk***

Destination guides

Amsterdam ***www.channels.nl***
Australia ***australia-online.com***
Bargainholidays ***www.bargainholidays.com***

Bugbog ***www.bugbog.co.uk***
Caribbean ***www.caribbean-travel.com***
Caribbean Islands ***www.gopelican.com***
France ***www.franceway.com***
Germany ***www.germany-tourism.de***
Greece ***www.gogreece.com***
Greece ***www.sunisle.co.uk***
India ***www.indiagov.org***
Italy ***www.travel.it***
Ireland ***www.12travel.co.uk***
Japan ***www.jnto.go.jp***
Scotland ***www.visitscotland.com***
Spain ***www.red2ooo.com***
UK ***www.exploreukland.co.uk***
US ***www.go-unitedstates.com***

Ferries

Ferry Savers ***www.ferrysavers.co.uk***
P&O ***www.poef.com/poef/index.htm***
Travel Britain ***www.travelbritain.com/UKPassengerFerries.html***
Travel.World ***www.travel.world.co.uk/ferries.htm***
UK Camp Site ***ukcampsite.co.uk***

Rail travel

Euro Railways ***www.eurorailways.com***
Great Eastern Railway ***www.ger.co.uk***
Great Western Trains ***www.great-western-trains.co.uk***
Railtrack ***www.railtrack.co.uk***
Scotrail ***www.scotrail.co.uk***
UK Public Transport ***www.pti.org.uk***
Virgin Trains ***www.virgintrains.co.uk***

Travel agents

Airtickets ***www.airtickets.co.uk***
Biztravel ***www.biztravel.com***
ebookers ***www.ebookers.com***
Expedia ***www.expedia.co.uk***
First Resort ***www.thefirstresort.com***
Holiday Deals ***www.holidaydeals.com***
Holiday Wizard ***www.holidaywizard.co.uk***
Internet Travel ***www.itsnet.co.uk***
Last Minute ***www.lastminute.com***
STA Travel ***www.statravel.co.uk***
ThomasCook.com ***www.thomascook.co.uk***
Thomson ***www.thomson-holidays.com***
Trailfinders ***www.trailfinder.com***
Travel Choice ***www.travelchoice.co.uk***
Usit Campus ***www.usitcampus.co.uk***

<WEBCAMS>

Directories

Allcam ***www.allcam.com***
Camcity ***www.camcity.com***
Digital Camera ***www.dcn.com***
FlyOnTheWall.com ***www.flyonthewall.com***
Webcam Central ***www.camcentral.com***
WebCam World ***www.webcamworld.com***
Webviews ***www.camvista.co.uk***

<WEB CENSORS>

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About.com ***www.about.com***
4anything ***www.4anything.com***
AOL Netfind ***www.aol.com/netfind***
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Liszt (mailing lists) ***www.liszt.com***
LookSmart ***www.looksmart.com***
Open Directory ***www.dmoz.org***
Thomson ***www.thomweb.co.uk***
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Yahoo! ***www.yahoo.com***
Yell ***www.yell.co.uk***

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TRAVEL NEW ENTRY

THE EMERALD ISLE GETS WIRED

We've taken a bit of a shine to this little Ireland-travel site. Maybe it's the bright colours, maybe it's the smiley happy-face logo, or maybe it's just because we loved some of the accommodation on offer. Whatever it is, we decided we had to give it a plug.

If work's getting to you and you feel in need of a short break, why not fly to Ireland? Wannabeinireland.com offers online flight and ferry bookings, car hire and insurance, not to mention those beautiful places to stay as mentioned. Choose from hotels, B&Bs, castles, cottages, farmhouses, town houses, country houses and self-catering accommodation. Lovely. ***www.wannabeinireland.com***

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The latest from the UK's No. 1 for the Internet

JULY 2001 NEWS 1 | WHAT'S ON FREESERVE 2 | DATING AND SHOPPING 4 | TOOLS & TIPS 6

Sport

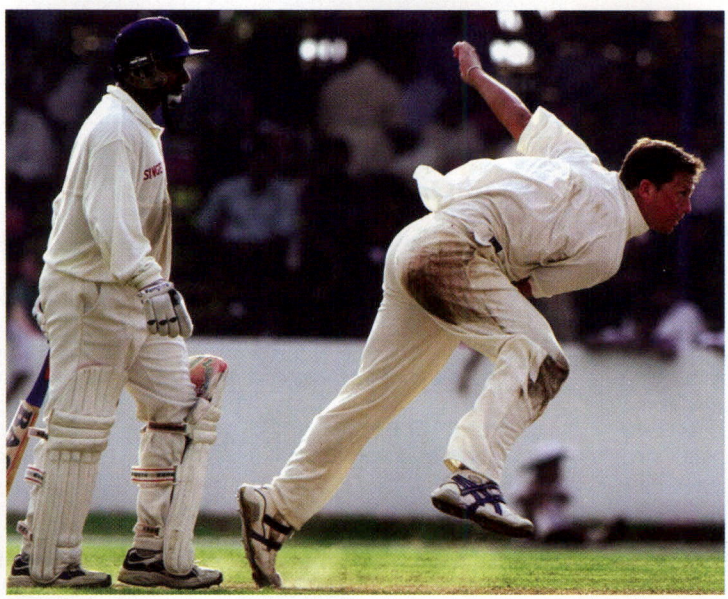
Champs kept on their toes

Freeserve are key players in England's cricket and tennis this summer

England cricketer Darren Gough is up against some tough competition this summer when the Freeserve Speedster measures the bowling speed of top players including Australia's Bret Lee and Pakistan's Shoaib Akthar.

Following last year's outstanding victory against the West Indies, the England team have been enjoying a series of international wins; Gough took the title of the season's fastest bowler with a breakneck 93.1 mph on the Speedster speedometer. The Speedster uses a unique radar system originally developed for military applications to measure the trajectory and speed of bullets and is accurate to within one percent of the actual speed.

So as this season gets into full swing and the Ashes series approaches, all eyes will be on the team and Gough to see if they can repeat their successes.



Gough in action: but will he keep his title?

The results of the Speedster competition will be posted at the end of the season on the Freeserve Sport channel (*www.freeserve.com/sport*), where there will be chances to win signed England cricket merchandise. You'll be able to quiz Gough about his technique and other subjects in live Web chats at *www.freeserve.com/chat*.

Freeserve play a big part in tennis, too, this summer, as they sponsor England star Greg Rusedski. Having overcome last year's foot injury, Rusedski is making a determined return with a busy schedule starting with the Stella Artois championship at Queens, followed by the Nottingham tournament and Wimbledon. He'll be providing feedback on his draws and matches on Chat, and there will be competitions to win tennis tickets and other goodies on Sport. Look out for both Rusedski and Darren Gough at *www.freeserve.com/sport*.

Live Web events on Sport

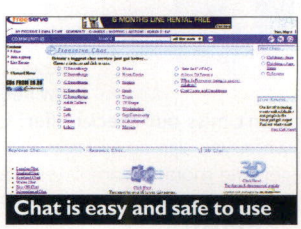
PICTURE: PA

Chat

Chat is top UK service

A quarter of a million people now use Freeserve Chat (*www.freeserve.com*), making it arguably the largest Internet chat service in the UK. Its popularity is the result of an impressive range of special features and the presence of friendly chat room moderators on hand to offer advice and maintain a safe and civil environment.

Users register to Chat by supplying their email address and choosing a nickname to go by; a unique password will then be sent to their email address. Once registered, users can enter Chat and start talking to other members. The Lobby is a good place for new members to get orientated. Here, you can pick up the threads of conversation on the message window and, when you feel comfortable,



Chat is easy and safe to use

chip in by typing your own comment and clicking on 'Send' to make it immediately visible to other chatters.

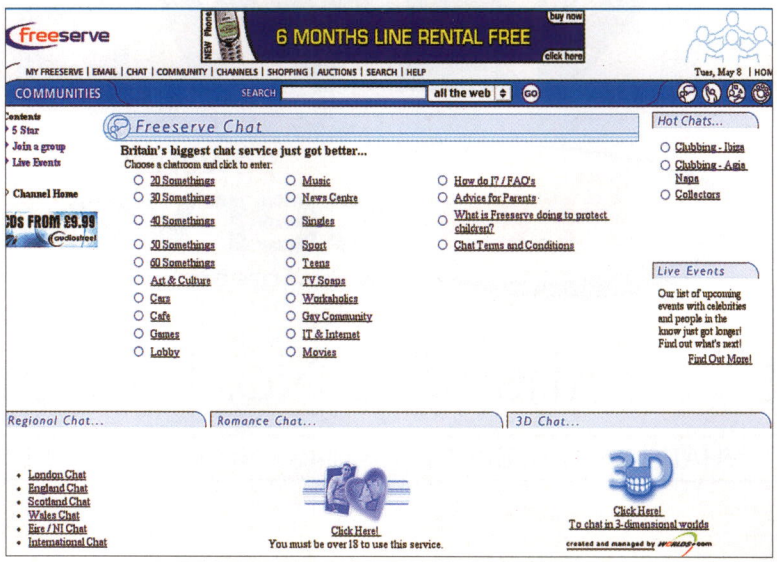
continued over >>

Chat is top UK service

>> (continued from page 1)

The Lobby and the Café are great places to chat with a wide range of people, but there's also a wide variety of chat rooms for particular groups, such as people your own age, or who live in your region. There are chat rooms for specific interests, too, such as cinema, music, cars or IT.

To add more expression to your messages you can send them with a sound or a symbol for an emotion or an action. You do this by clicking on the appropriate icon at the bottom of the Chat window. Or, if you want your comments to really stand out, you can change the colour of your text and its background. You can also choose to 'whisper' to individuals in your chat room (including a moderator – useful if you want to report misbehaviour by another member) or you can choose to send them a private memo. And by clicking on a member's name and choosing Person To Person, you can start a private conversation.

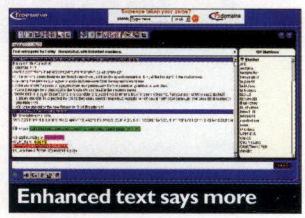


Chat online with like-minded people

Because anyone can enter Chat, you might sometimes find one of the other chatters annoying or even offensive. So you always have the option to ignore them by clicking on their name in the members' list and selecting 'Ignore Member' to make their comments invisible to you. You can always change your mind later.

In addition to having moderators in many of the chat rooms, Freeserve Chat also has specially ring-fenced Teen rooms to make them exclusive to young people. But because Freeserve also recognises the importance of freedom of speech, there are a number of ring-fenced rooms for adults only, too. These are unmoderated, although any abusive behaviour will be quickly picked up by the Freeserve authorities, and offenders banned from Chat altogether.

It's these safety features and the range of communication options that make Freeserve Chat one of the safest and most varied chat services in the UK today. So whether it's your first time or you're an experienced online chatterbox, you'll find Freeserve Chat the best place to find like-minded chatters and become part of this growing online community. *www.freeserve.com/chat*.



Enhanced text says more

What you'll get from Freeserve

FREE INTERNET CALLS

Everyone uses the Internet in different ways. Some use it for work; others browse in the evenings at home; still more just check their email a couple of times a day. So Freeserve has a choice of great-value packages to suit every kind of user. For detailed information about AnyTime, HomeTime, No Ties and our high-speed service Freeserve Plus, visit *www.freeserve.com/time*.

Don't miss our special offer! Until June 30th, when you sign up to Freeserve AnyTime you'll get one month's completely free Internet use!

EMAIL

Email allows you to send messages all over the world, at any time of the day or night, and receive a reply within seconds. With Freeserve, all email is free; all you pay for is the cost of the connection to the Internet.

MOBILE INTERNET

Because email is sent to and from computers, there's always the worry that you're missing vital messages whenever you're away from your PC. But with a mobile Internet (or WAP) phone, you can access your emails whenever you're away from your PC. To find out how, visit *www.freeserve.com/mobile*.

TALKING EMAIL

If you don't have a mobile Internet phone, you can still access your emails when you're away from your computer – by using Speechmail, a clever service which reads your email messages to you. Find more information at *www.freeserve.com/communications*.

YOUR OWN WEB SPACE

Once you've started looking around the Internet, chances are you'll be keen to build your own site. That's easy when you become a Freeserve member. We'll give you a massive 15 megabytes of free space in which to create your own site. The software on the free installation CD, which you can use to sign up as a member, makes it easy to get your site up and running. With Freeserve, you'll soon be at home on the Internet.

THE BEST CONTENT

As well as offering so many great services, Freeserve is dedicated to bringing you the very best content on the Internet and collecting it all on the Freeserve Today page at *www.freeserve.com*. Make Today your homepage to get an instant digest of all the latest news, weather and sport whenever you log on to the Internet.

FREESERVE FOR EVERY PART OF YOUR LIFE

Freeserve has 18 excellent channels, one for every part of your life, from Lifestyle to Careers, Sport to Business, Health to Money; Shopping has everything you could possibly want, and there's a whole channel for Women. And our email newsletter will keep you up to date with everything that's going on at Freeserve. *www.freeserve.com*

Sign up online at www.freeserve.com or use the free Freeserve installation CD available from Dixons, Currys, PC World and The Link. Or call 0800 068 0080 to have it delivered direct.

Women

Guarantee a stress-free holiday

Have the holiday you deserve

Everyone looks forward to their holiday as an opportunity to completely de-stress – relax, soak up the sun and forget all their worries. But when you and partner go away together, do you spend most of your time arguing instead? It's a common problem, say the experts. With such great expectations resting on such a short break, disappointment can easily lead to lost tempers when things don't go perfectly.

But you don't have to fall into the same trap this summer. Before you go away, have a look at the guide to holiday planning in Sex and Relationships on icircle, the Freeserve Women's channel (at *www.icircle.com*). You'll find advice on learning to compromise when your partner's plans don't fit exactly with yours, and pointers to researching your holiday so you know what to expect before you get there. Learn how to manage disappointment, too. Swot up before you leave and maximise your chances of an idyllic break. *www.icircle.com*

Business

Make your business bigger: get online

Britain's small businesses are seeing tangible results from having their own Web sites, according to new research from Clearlybusiness, the Freeserve business channel. Over the last 12 months, around one in five small businesses have witnessed a radical impact since since going online.

But whatever the reason you put it on the Web, whether it be to cut costs, find new customers or build a better relationship with existing ones, your business must be properly prepared. For example, your site should be customer-friendly while meeting your business objectives; you'll also want to ensure that customers know how to find you online.

Online advice to get your business online

With the addition of new articles, planners and checklists, the Clearlybusiness e.business section now has even more help and advice to guide you through every stage of getting your business on the Internet. Find out how to prepare your business for the Web, how to measure and improve the effectiveness of your site once it's up and running, and how to protect it once it's live.

Whether you're new to the Internet or want your existing site to work harder for you, log onto *www.clearlybusiness.com/ebusiness* to find out more.

A-Z CHANNEL GUIDE

WITH 18 CHANNELS TO CHOOSE FROM, THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Auctions
The thrill of bidding for a bargain isn't restricted to the auction room. You can bid online for almost any item imaginable!

Business
Clearlybusiness can offer your business support and advice, and get you online, whether you're well established or you've just started out.

Careers
You're wired, now get hired, not fired! Careers lets you search databases of 70,000 jobs nationwide and apply online with your CV.

Chat
The new, improved chat service is a great hit. Make new friends, set up your own chat groups; you can even talk to the stars!

Entertainment
Here you'll find all the latest film, music, radio and television news. You can buy CDs, books, DVDs and concert tickets here, too.

Games
Read reviews of the latest games, visit the virtual shop to buy the ones you want, pick up some top cheating tips and play online.

Health
The Freeserve Health channel has advice and information to help you and your family stay in tip-top condition.

Learning
From primary through to A-level and beyond, our interactive environment makes learning easier for all ages.

Lifestyle
The Lifestyle channel is an exclusive magazine covering every aspect of your social and personal life, and much more.

Money
Keep your finances in order with expert advice from Money, where you'll find tips on everything from ISAs to mortgages.

Motoring
Get on the road with the Freeserve Motoring channel, your one-stop shop for all your motoring needs.

News and Weather
Get tomorrow's papers today with this superb service delivering the latest news and weather.

Property
From finding the right mortgage to sorting the decorators from the cowboys, on Property you'll find everything for your home.

Search
Use Search to find anything on the Internet, including businesses and services, domain names and items on FSauctions.

Shopping
At Shopping you can find a huge range of items, from flowers or food to a CD or a computer. Look out for exclusive bargains, too.

Sport
Football, rugby, tennis, cricket, motorsport, golf – the list goes on. Whatever your sport, you'll find the latest news and results here.

Travel
Visit the Travel channel for instant access to a database of 70,000 flights and holidays worldwide as well as sensational last-minute deals.

Women
For features, information and advice, Web women need look no further than the Freeserve women's channel, icircle.com.

PICTURES: RETNA

Love on the ocean waves

The ultimate dating game comes to Freeserve in the form of a virtual luxury cruise

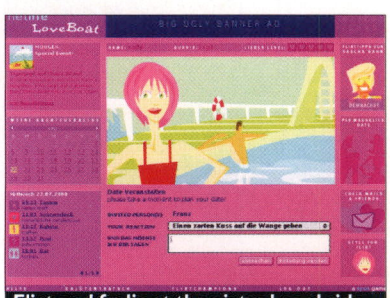
Send your avatar on a romantic virtual helicopter trip

Continuing, as it does, to revolutionise every part of our lives, the Internet comes to the rescue of lonely hearts everywhere with Flirtboat, a new online game on icircle, the Freeserve women's channel (*www.icircle.com*). Flirtboat is a giant virtual luxury liner which takes a three-month cruise; its passengers are 30,000 personalised avatars, each one the alter ego of a real-life player. While enjoying life on the ship, each avatar flirts with the passengers on board, which are in fact the avatars of other players plus a few regular fixtures on Flirtboat. Throughout the game, the avatar keeps its player up to date with its activities and liaisons via regular reports which the player can view on the Flirtboat Web site, accompanied scenes of key events the avatar has enjoyed.

The game is an innovative creation launched in Austria at the end of last year. The first British cruise carries the next generation of the game and leaves icircle this June. Because Flirtboat has already proved incredibly popular, there are going to be four successive games in order to cope with the demand, but you'll still need to sign up well in advance if you want to play.

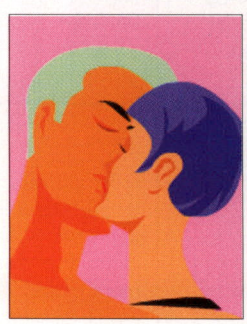
Because Flirtboat is incredibly popular, you'll need to sign up well in advance

If you get a place on the Flirtboat, you'll start by checking in, as you might on a real-life cruise. But unlike a real-life cruise, you then complete a psychometric test, the results of which are used to select the most appropriate avatar for you from 16 types defined by the famous psychologist Carl Jung. You can then refine the personality profile of your avatar and describe its looks; this is the information other users may choose to view later on in the game.



Flirt and frolic at the virtual pool side

After a welcome drink in the ship's foyer, your avatar begins to explore the ship. He (or she) meets some of the regular fixtures on the Flirtboat, such as Babe Brighton, Lady Violetta Paisley Pimpernel or Pick-Up Pete. He'll entertain himself by exploring the many decks, bars and restaurants, or simply by lounging by the pool or reading a book in a quiet corner. He might choose to take part in one of the events offered by the Flirtboat crew, such as the 'Count the Falling Stars' evening, or have a candle-lit dinner with one of the other guests. He'll carry on enjoying himself whether or not the player is actually online, and, as the game continues, his character will develop as he attends more events and meets more passengers.



You'll know when you've had a successful date!

Reading your avatar's report of his adventures on board is great fun! He'll tell you what he's been up to, who he has met and which of his liaisons have been a success. But while for the most part the avatar acts independently, the player can make certain choices for him: which events to attend on board the

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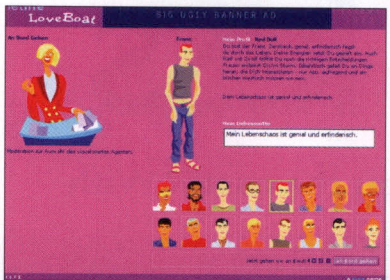


Style your personality and your looks

ship, which other avatars to pursue or to avoid. Players can also choose special events for their avatars. There's a helicopter trip which gives a view of the Flirtboat from the air, or a Pool Party – an excellent opportunity to frolic and flirt with the other guests!

It's particularly important that your avatar enjoys as many experiences and flirts with as many other guests as possible, because this is how he'll earn 'flirtpoints'. At the end of all four Flirtboat games, the player with the most flirtpoints will win a real-life luxury cruise!

Perhaps the ultimate event to look forward to is when your avatar meets a compatible passenger – because if two avatars get on, so should their players! When the avatar has a successful first date with another guest on the Flirtboat, he'll tell the player in his report – an accompanying picture of the couple kissing will be the most obvious give-away! The player then has the option to view the other player's personality profile, created at the start of the game. The player may then invite the other avatar on more dates and choose various activities for his own avatar to perform, such as organising a candlelight dinner or giving the date a peck on the cheek. If you're uninterested in another's invitation, you always have the option to turn their offer down.

But once a compatible avatar has been found, the icing on the cake is the opportunity players have to send Web mails to each other in the guise of love letters from their respective avatars, allowing players to have one-to-one contact. And because the messages are sent via email addresses based at the Flirtboat site, it's a completely safe environment; there's no way players can know each other's real identities or email addresses.

Even if you don't find a real-life partner through the Flirtboat, you'll find plenty of virtual romance and have a great time just watching the game unfold! Book your place as soon as you can by going to *www.icircle.com*.

SHOPPING

The silly season

With so many barmy deals on offer, it's definitely summer at Freeserve

The Shopping channel has had a stylish redesign, just in time for summer. And that's not all it's got to put shoppers in a sunny mood. Now Shopping has even more high-street stores and top-name brands than ever before, plus lots of exclusive discounts and special Hot Deals. There are 21 different departments on Shopping, and over 100 individual stores, making it the ultimate one-stop shop for everything you could want to buy online. And because there's so much in store, the channel now has improved navigation so that it's even quicker and easier for you to find what you're after. That way, you can spend less time indoors this summer, and more in the sun.

With so much choice on offer, it helps to have a few pointers. Each week, the Shopping team will be offering their own impartial reviews of items to help you decide what to spend your money on. And if you find yourself visiting an unfamiliar store for a certain item but want to know what else it sells, you'll find a helpful summary of it in the A-Z Store Directory as well as a monthly review of a featured store.

Enjoy a summer bonanza

At Freeserve and at any of its online stores, buying online with your credit or debit card is safe and secure. And because all of the stores abide by the Freeserve Promise, you can rest assured that you'll always get a reliable, fair and high-quality service. But if you're a first-time online shopper or you just want some extra reassurance, you'll now find information and advice about safe online shopping.

FATHER'S DAY

Shopping is constantly coming up with seasonal events to make your shopping easier and more enjoyable. So for Father's Day on Sunday, June 17th, there's a special Father's Day mini-site with lots of clever ideas to help you spoil your dad. Too busy even to send him a card? Worried you'll forget Father's Day as soon as you've read this? Shopping has the perfect solution: choose a card from the online card shop, send in your message, and the card will be delivered direct to dad for you. And if you want to find out exactly how Father's Day came about, Shopping has researched all the background for you so you can impress your friends and family by telling them about Sonara Smart Dodd and her role in founding the annual celebration.

SUMMER MADNESS

Whatever you get up to this summer, don't miss Shopping's barmy summer bonanza. For eight weeks you'll find an exclusive promotion in a different department of Shopping, with a new one starting each weekend. And as if that wasn't enough to get excited about, watch out for the fantastic competition to win a holiday abroad. You'll find everything about this, the Father's Day mini-site and all the other great bargains on Shopping by going straight to *www.freeserve.com/shopping*.

Look out for the chance to win a great break away

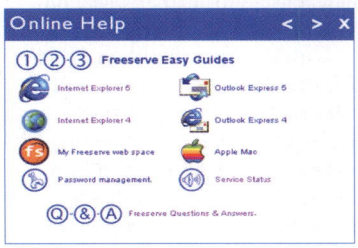
PICTURE: IMAGE BANK

ONLINE HELP

YOUR PROBLEMS SOLVED

FREESERVE ONLINE HELP

If you've got a problem with the Internet or have a question about it, you can get a straight answer, straight away, from Freeserve online Help (*www.freeserve.com/help*). Read the following summaries of our four main Help sections to find the one that suits your type of query. Then connect to Freeserve and choose Help to have your problem solved.

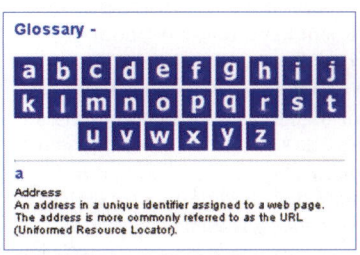


THE GLOSSARY

If there's an Internet expression you don't understand, you'll find it here in plain English.

THE EASY GUIDES

If there's an area of your Internet use that's causing you difficulty, turn to our Easy Guides for a solution.


Glossary -
a b c d e f g h i j
k l m n o p q r s t
u v w x y z
a
Address
An address in a unique identifier assigned to a web page. The address is more commonly referred to as the URL (Uniformed Resource Locator).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

If you've a specific question, go to our Q&A section. Select the general area from our drop-down menu to find a specific question and our answer.

CONTACT

If you still need help, you can email our technical help desk, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They'll be happy to help. Direct email addresses are listed on the contacts page, or you can call the following:

PC users **0906 2517517**
Mac users **0906 7234000**

Calls cost 50p per minute.

www.freeserve.com/help

Talk for less

Are overseas phone calls costing you the earth? With

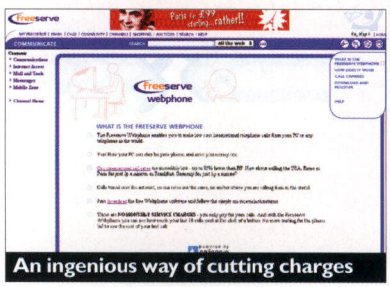
Making an international call can quickly burn a hole in your pocket, particularly if you're making it during the day. At this time, calling the USA costs a smouldering 24p a minute with BT; talking to someone in Pakistan for the same duration is a blazing £1.34! Just five-minutes chatting to a friend or to relatives overseas can still add up to a horrible shock when you get your phone bill.

There's no reason why you have to pay this much, however, if you have access to the Internet. By using Freeserve Webphone you can call some countries for less than a peak-time local call within the UK. Freeserve Webphone uses ingenious new technology which turns your Internet connection into a phone line, allowing you to make international calls at any time of the day or night for rates as much as 85 per cent lower than regular phone charges. For example, to call the USA with Webphone costs an amazing 2p a minute, even in the middle of the day; calling France costs the same. Pakistan is just 35p a minute, and a call to Australia just 3p, even if you make your call in the morning. And there is no service charge or line rental for Webphone. All you pay for is the cost of your calls.

Not only is Webphone a brilliant way of saving money, it's also incredibly easy to install, though you'll need to check that your PC has the minimum hardware requirements – to do this go to *www.freeserve.com/communciations/webphone/download*. Using a PC with the right specifications, it takes just a few minutes to download the special free Webphone software (which you can get from *www.freeserve.com/communications/webphone*). You then register and pre-pay for some call time online using your credit or debit card. (If you've ever paid for anything online with Freeserve, you'll know that our system is safe and secure.)

When you start up Webphone, a virtual mobile phone will appear on your PC screen. You then use either your mouse or the numbers on your keyboard to dial the number you want to call. To talk to the person you're calling, you'll need a microphone and speakers connected to your PC; a

Overseas call charges don't have to be horrifying



An ingenious way of cutting charges

powered by freeserve www.freeserve.com

online

Webphone you'll pay peanuts

headset combining the two works even better. The person you're calling receives your phone call on their regular telephone.

Because Webphone calls travel over the World Wide Web, the rates are the same, no matter where in the world you're calling from. So if you're on a business trip in Germany and you're using Webphone on your laptop, for example, a call to the USA will still cost you the equivalent of 2p a minute; and it would cost you the same even if you were calling from a friend's PC during a visit to Japan. It makes no difference what time of day you call; the rates are always the same.

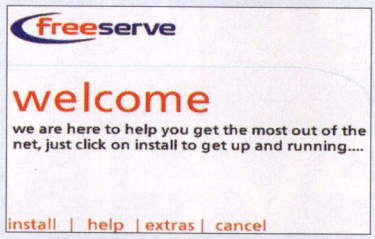
And since Webphone works anywhere in the world, friends and family overseas can download the software so they can call you in the UK, or anywhere else, at exactly the same rates, paying in their local currency. They can even check in advance exactly how much a call to you will cost, by using the Interactive international ca charge calcula or. (Bear in mind and premium ra ore.)

With Fr phone ca on of what the il keep time you eck hov time you alls. So if alls but don't want to pay a pen more than you need to, you'll want Webphone. You'll find everything you need at *www.freeserve.com/communications/webphone*.

Dial abroad using a virtual mobile phone on your PC

GETTING YOUR PC ONLINE

OUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO INSTALLING FREESERVE


freeserve
welcome
we are here to help you get the most out of the net, just click on install to get up and running....
install | help | extras | cancel

1 Insert your Freeserve CD and wait for it to autorun. If it doesn't, go to the start menu and select 'Run', then type D:/setup.exe and click 'OK'.

2 Next, choose 'Install'. The helpful connection wizard will automatically guide you through the right steps to get connected. Click on 'Install Internet Explorer' to continue. If you already have Internet Explorer on your PC, it will now be updated.

3 A licence agreement pops up. Read through it and click 'I Accept' followed by the 'Next' button at the bottom of the box.

4 After selecting the destination folder for Internet Explorer (the installer will automatically create a new folder for it in the Programs folder), you get a choice of how much to install. There's a recommended 'typical' set of components, or you can pick and choose your own – if, say, your hard drive is a bit full. The wizard then takes over and begins the installation process. Sit back and wait to be prompted before moving on to the next step.

5 The wizard will quite possibly optimise your system to get the best possible performance out of it. Let it do so – it knows what it's doing.

6 In just a minute or two, a message appears informing you that installation is complete. Click on the 'OK' button to move on to the next step.

7 Wait for the wizard to automatically configure your PC to run the new version of Internet Explorer. After a few moments, you'll be prompted to restart your PC. Click the 'Finish' button and wait for your PC to automatically restart. If the CD does not autorun, double click on the CD drive icon in Windows to continue.

8 When your computer gets going again, it will update its settings for IE5 and Internet Tools. This is perfectly normal.

9 You're now ready to sign up to your Freeserve account. Make sure your modem is switched on and click 'Continue'. Your modem will then dial into the Freeserve registration computer.

10 You'll be prompted by a security alert confirming your connection. Click 'OK'.

11 A welcome screen provides two options. New members should click on the 'Create New Account' option.

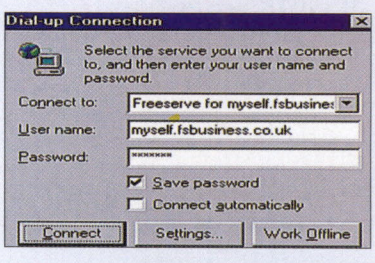
12 Take a couple of minutes to read the terms and conditions, and click 'Accept'. Enter your personal details so your account can be set up. Click 'Continue'.

13 The Help screen explains how your Freeserve email address is constructed. Choose your email address and password and click on 'Continue'.

14 Congratulations. You are now a member of Freeserve. Click on the 'Finished' button when you're ready.

15 When you launch Internet Explorer, it automatically contacts the Freeserve number and sends your username and password to the Freeserve computer (unless you uncheck 'Save password'). This is all you need to log on to the Internet.

16 Once connected, Internet Explorer takes you straight to the Freeserve Web site. You can now start to explore the Internet for just the cost of a local phone call.



Pick up your Freeserve CD from any Dixons, Currys, PC World or The Link store, or have it sent to you direct by calling 0800 068 0080. It's free.

powered by freeserve www.freeserve.com

PICTURE: KOBAL COLLECTION

NEW

The UK's best FREE Internet trial ever!

Join Freeserve AnyTime today and get your first month completely free

With Freeserve AnyTime, you only pay £12.99 per month to use the Internet day or night and there are no extra call charges. That's all you pay to chat, email or search any time day or night.

Now, new Freeserve AnyTime customers enjoy one month of ***completely free Internet use.***

- ***No Internet call charges***
- ***No subscription charges***
- ***No strings • No catches***
- ***No worries!***

Hurry, this offer is only available until June 30th. Use this CD to join Freeserve today and get online for your FREE month. Free month trial with Freeserve Anytime at www.freeserve.com/time

be freeserve
www.freeserve.com

THE UK's No. 1 FOR THE INTERNET

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Net help that's one step smarter

@ CHANNELS ://

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Want to be a better gamer? You'll need our essential guide to online success, which runs through the tips, tricks, hardware and software you want

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The results of our latest lab tests of 200 UK providers, rated for speed, connectivity and reliability

> ISPs AND SOFTWARE 100
How to get the Internet by satellite, ISPs go 0800-crazy plus a round-up of this month's essential surfing software

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Ensure that you've covered all the bases with our back-to-basics guide to email, the Web, chat and newsgroups

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Getting streaming video onto your site without spending a fortune

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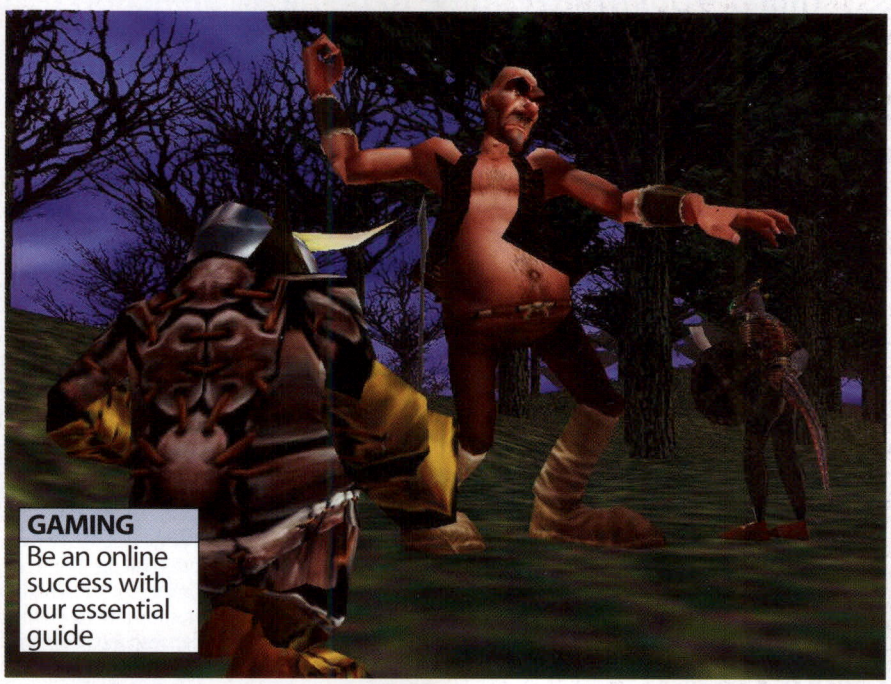
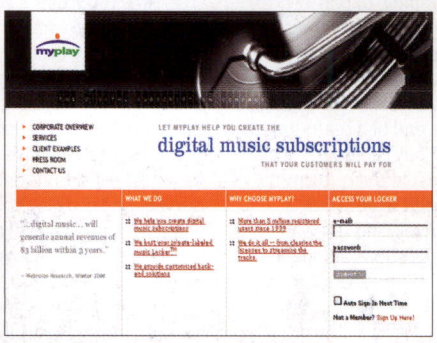
Your pressing problems, from ISPs to email, solved by our team of experts



GAMING
Be an online success with our essential guide



RADIO Share your sounds

VIRUSES Don't get caught out

Be a better killer

Success in online gaming doesn't just depend on the speed of your trigger finger – our insider guide to being an all-action hero will give you the edge

Gaming: a social phenomenon

AT ANY ONE TIME, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ARE playing online games. From *Quake 3* to *Crazy Aces* (a card game, not a flight simulation), people are indulging in a hobby that brings them into contact with gamers all over the globe. Bored with the challenge of beating the computer, these gamers range from geeks-of-fable to parish vicars.

And while everybody plays for different reasons, one thing unites these people – they'd all like to win. Sure, the victory celebrations are a little different round a game of cards as opposed to the sort of comments that greet the end of a team-based first-person shooter, but nobody can honestly say they play without any interest in the outcome.

If you want to win, you need to get your dial-up, your PC, your peripherals and software into shape. Consider our suggestions an online gaming boot camp – you won't be SAS material, but you will be able to handle yourself better...

USE THE RIGHT DIAL-UP

As a games player you'll have a wholly different set of demands to your average Internet user. Companies like Demon, Clara.Net, BT and AOL all offer dial-ups that can be used to play games online, but you'll find that your pings – the connection rates used to determine how quickly you can respond to on-screen events – are bad, giving your opponents a distinct advantage over you. This isn't important if you only plan to play card games, but is crucial for an action-based game.

Cable companies like Telewest have offered unmetered dial-in access for the reasonable price of £10 a month for nearly a year now. And while you'll get absolutely horrendous pings on most games servers with that Telewest dial-up, you'll get reasonable ones on their own BlueYonder servers. So one thing to find out, before you sign up, is whether your ISP runs their own games servers (in which case you'll get good pings) or whether you'll have to use someone else's.

In our experience, gamers are prepared to put up with pretty lousy pings if they're not being charged too much for their dial-up access. And of course, someone who plays an RPG online won't be as dependant on ping as someone who plays a »

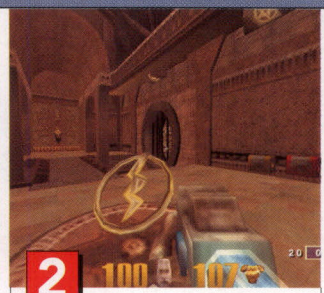
PICTURES: PA

SIX TIPS FOR BETTER GAMING

1

PRACTICE OFFLINE

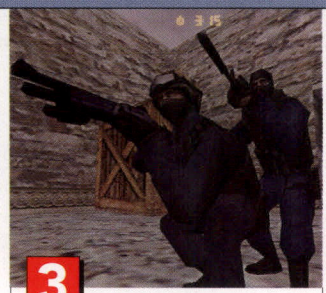
Why spend valuable time getting blasted into little pieces by more experienced players simply because you're new to a game? Simply play it offline and get a feel for the movements, weapons and situations before you launch into the online free-for-all.



2

VARY BACKGROUND DETAIL

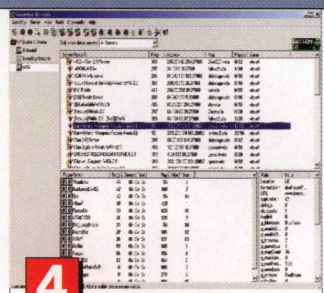
It's tempting to include as much detail as possible in each game, so you can fully enjoy the flashy graphics. However, this will may slow the game down and result in your reactions become slower than other players. Choose 'Low background' for optimum performance.



3

PLAY DEFENSIVELY

Not everyone is at their best when attacking the opposition: some people find their shoot-em-up skills are best suited to defending their own camp and picking off incoming attackers. That's every bit as valid and important as glory-grabbing, so don't see it as a soft option.



4

PLAY ON SERVERS

Using a downloadable application like GameSpy (see below) will enable you to search the whole Net at once for servers which have room for you. If you find the going a bit too tough at first, why not look for a server designed for gaming newcomers, which will allow you to practice in safety?

shooter. So you may prefer to muddle through until they run cable past your front door or BT upgrade your exchange to be ADSL capable.

The bottom line is that you're going to have a more enjoyable games-playing experience if you use a specialised ISP. These guys run hundreds of servers, meaning you'll get brilliant pings. They're also prepared for the assault on bandwidth that games playing involves, so you won't get nasty emails telling you your account's been suspended.

OPTIMISE YOUR PC

So what happens if you get a game, install it on your PC and discover that it's running slowly or that you find it uncontrollable? Fortunately, developers often include large set-up sections in their games which enable you to tailor the game's demands to your PC's performance level. Knowing what to change and when can make all the difference.

Unless you've got an extremely powerful PC (such as a Pentium 4-based machine), you probably won't be able to run a game (especially a graphics-intensive action game) at its maximum resolution. The best way to find out which resolution, be it 640x480, 800x600, 1024x768, 1152x864 or even 1600x1200, is to start at 1024x768 and either work your way up or down until you get acceptable performance.

Many games have options to increase the level of detail in the gameworld and it's always tempting to turn this setting up full because you want the game to look its best. However, the more detail you ask the game to create for you, the more demands are placed on your graphics card and CPU. So again, experiment with this setting until you find a balance between quality of image and the speed of the game.

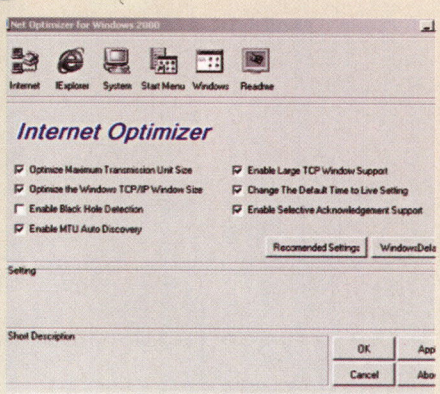
It's not just the graphics settings that can affect your ability to play a game – the way it's controlled can also have a huge impact. For instance, you may control the mouse with your left hand and find

ESSENTIAL GAMING DOWNLOADS

Tools of the trade»

GAMESPY ***www.gamespy.com***

One of the big problems with online games is locating a server with a good ping that has free player slots on it. It's for precisely this reason that Gamespy is worth its weight in gold. It lists all servers for a massive range of games (from *Baldur's Gate* to *Wheel of Time* and all stops in between), rates them according to speed and indicates when there's space available on one.

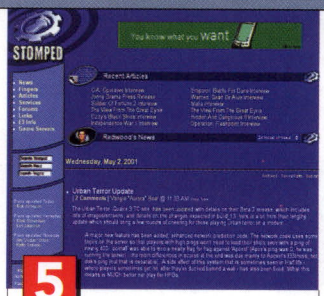


NET OPTIMIZER ***www.tweaknow.com/netopt.html***

We've tried all the miracle-cure Internet connection optimisation tools, but this is the only one we've got consistently good results from. Net Optimizer is extremely easy to use – you just pick your connection type (modem, ISDN etc) and it tweaks all your system settings accordingly to give you the best possible connection without spending hours fiddling around.

ROGER WILCO ***www.resounding.com***

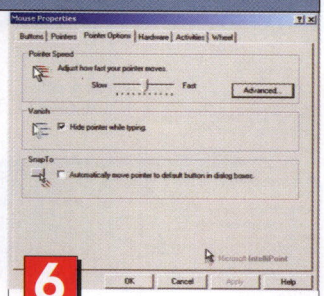
Traditionally, team members have communicated with each other by typing instructions to each other – as you can imagine, that's less than efficient. Of far more use is voice communications, which enables all players to co-ordinate offence and defence. This brilliant voice comms application is extremely good (and friendly to modem users) and is also completely free.



5

KEEP UP TO DATE

Gaming is a constantly evolving discipline, so make sure you've got your finger on the pulse by trawling through gaming sites for the latest news, tips and strategies on your current favourites – plus reviews and advance news of new games you might like to try out.



6

MOUSE SENSITIVITY

The sensitivity of your mouse is the single most important factor in determining how responsive a game is to your commands. Try out a range of different settings before you find the right one for you – too sensitive and you'll throw yourself all over the place, too unresponsive and you'll be cannon fodder.

the default control settings unusable. You can change any of the control keys from the main set-up window in any game but you can also change the mouse buttons around so that the primary button is the right mouse button and secondary is the left button.

If you find action games too hard to control then you might want to change the sensitivity setting of the mouse. Again, you'll find this in the main setup window – usually depicted by a sliding scale. Move the scale to the far right to have a very sensitive mouse (better for more advanced players) and to the left for less sensitivity (better for beginners).

BE PREPARED

The key to doing well at any game is, of course, practice. The problem is that if you're a competitive sort of a person then you won't like getting your arse kicked repeatedly simply because you haven't put the hours in yet. The solution to being a 'newbie' (or rather to avoid being one) is to play offline.

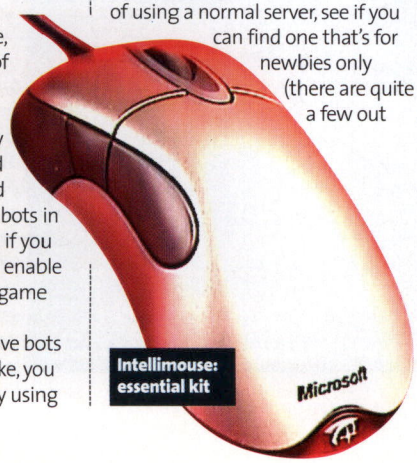
Pretty much every game, even the ones that are specifically designed to be played online, can be played in some sort of capacity offline. *Unreal Tournament* (UT), for instance, enables you to play against computer-controlled 'bots' in any of the maps and game modes. Moreover, the bots in *UT* are pretty good, but even if you find them a pushover they'll enable you to get to grips with the game without being online.

Even if a game doesn't have bots built in, such as Counter-Strike, you can still practice the maps by using the game's Local Area Network (LAN) mode. There won't be anyone else on these maps to play against, but it's a great way of working out routes through the map, of locating all the power-ups and of finding out all the secret bits without being under pressure from other players.

If you've got a spare PC on your office network then you can convince a friend to come and compete against you on your LAN. Quite often the simple fact that you don't feel under pressure to go and track down the other team members means you learn far more about the game and the way the physics are designed (how far you can fall without getting damaged, how far weapons travel etc) than you ever would online.

KNOW YOUR LIMIT

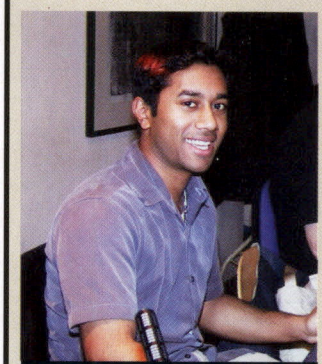
Dirty Harry said it and it's very true of online games – you should know your limitations. If you find that you're getting regularly humiliated online, then look again at who you're playing against and how you're playing. For instance, instead of using a normal server, see if you can find one that's for newbies only (there are quite a few out »



Intellimouse: essential kit

THE UK'S TOP GAMER TELLS ALL

The pro's secrets»



Sujoy: a very rich gamer indeed

He's an Oxbridge graduate who decided not to pursue the usual careers of a desk at Goldman Sachs or a post in a foreign embassy and instead took up professional gaming. Sujoy Roy (Sujoy means 'Great Warrior' in Bengali) makes a living from playing in professional leagues and from lucrative sponsorship deals. It's fair to say that he knows a fair bit of online gaming, so we asked him for his top tips for newbies.

1. Practice Against The Right People 'If you want to become good, you have to find good players to play against. The downside of that is that you have to be able to take losing – because you're going to lose. A lot. It comes down to dedication – if you can take losing your first 100 games to improve yourself then you're on your way.'

2. The Right Connection 'Many people aren't aware of latency, or lag, because when you're surfing the Web, it doesn't actually make a difference whether it takes an extra second to load a page, but in online gaming, every millisecond counts. The bottom line is that you have to get hooked up with the best possible connection, and to be honest a 56k modem doesn't quite cut it for action games. With a 56k modem there's a quarter of a second delay between you and the server and you'll end up shooting in the wrong place or not being able to dodge a rocket. So you have to try and get hold of ADSL or a cable modem because it'll make a huge difference.'

'A decent mouse has to be able to keep up with your brain'

3. The Right Kit 'Once you get to the stage where you can aim and you can think right, you have to then go and get the right equipment. It's no different to a tennis player getting a good racket and a good pair of trainers. You need the right hardware and the most important part of that is a decent mouse. It has to be accurate, it has to be fast and it has to be able to keep up with your brain.'

4. Start Gently 'To start with, play free-for-all games, because you're always going to get some points, no matter how bad you are, because you'll get the odd lucky shot in. Play CTF games because they have a pretty standard rule set – you know there's a flag you have to get and which you can focus on and sometimes you go in and get lucky and you're the hero. With CTF games you don't have to be the best player in the world.'

5. Think 'This is the main rule of online gaming. Once you've got the strategy down, how to aim, how to move around, the next level is when you can predict your opponent. And when you can do that, you win every time. Knowing the maps is essential, but being able to predict your opponent – seeing which way he's going and being able to guess where he's going to be at exactly what time – is crucial. You have to ambush people, you have to cut them off. You have to make sure they don't get to the important weapons.'

6. Dress Down. If you're playing at a professional level, you have to get an advantage out of every little setting, which means turning off all the flashes, all the bright lights, all the things the games programmers spent so long working on. You have to turn all that stuff off and in the end it looks like *Quake 1*, like a game of Lego men. It's about not being distracted by smoke. It'll all help you to win.

Sujoy does his gaming at The Playing Fields, Whitfield St, London (***www.theplayingfields.co.uk***).

Blues News: one of the best places to find gaming gossip and tips

Sharky Extreme: the latest hardware and software reviews for gamers

there). If you're playing real-time strategy games like *Command & Conquer* then you can play against other people of specific grades.

In team-based games, a wide variety of roles are required of the players on a particular team. For instance, you need defenders and you need attackers. So if you find you keep getting killed en-route to the enemy flag, try defending your own one instead – you'll have a ready supply of power-ups and inventory and the help of your team-mates. Defence is a great way to start playing games like *Team Fortress Classic* (*TFC*), *Quake 3 CTF* and *Tribes 2*.

Some people get on better with some weapons than others, because they suit their playing style. In *TFC*, for instance, some people specialise in sniping because they have the patience to wait for a shot and the accuracy to get it on target when it arises. So experiment with all the different weapons on offer and learn to use them effectively.

There are plenty of team-based games out there that have a player class devoted to deviousness. In *TFC* it's the Spy, in *Weapons Factory Arena* it's the Assassin, in *Tribes 2* it's the Infiltrator. So if you fancy the idea of lurking in the shadows, pouncing on your prey and then melting away, try playing one of these classes.

OUT-THINK THE ENEMY

Many people think that first-person shooters like *Quake 3* are all about reaction times and hand/eye co-ordination. And those skills do, of course, play a large part in doing well – but the ability to think quickly is just as valuable a skill.

If you're playing a team-based capture-the-flag type of game and the flag has been moved away from its resting place, think twice before you charge blindly in to try and get it. The defenders will be expecting you, so instead of coming in from the front, circle round the back. Try not to fall into an easily predictable pattern of movement.

Defenders and attackers also adapt to particular player classes, so try varying the class you play. If you have been trying to enter the enemy's flag room as a soldier or marine, try using a scout or a spy. Quite often this sudden change in attack is all it takes to get the flag swiped away, even from heavily-defended zones.

In both shooters and strategy games, the best form of defence is a good offence. In strategy games, some players make the mistake of building up huge bases, bristling with armaments, while the other player is out taking control of the rest of the map. Nobody's saying you shouldn't defend, but you shouldn't do it at the expense of not attacking at all.

TRY SOMETHING ELSE

Of course, straightforward shoot-em-ups aren't everyone's cup of tea: if you'd rather try something a tad more sedate or cerebral, there are plenty of options at your disposal.

Role-playing games have been in existence since the very dawn of the computer age, but the advent of online gaming has taken them into whole new realms. Such games require strategy and logic as much as trigger-finger dexterity, and can get a little nerdy at times. They are, however, massively involving.

The two most popular RPGs at the moment are *Everquest* (***everquest.station.sony.com***) and *Ultima Online* (***www.uo.com***), though cheaper alternatives include *Warcraft* and *Diablo*.

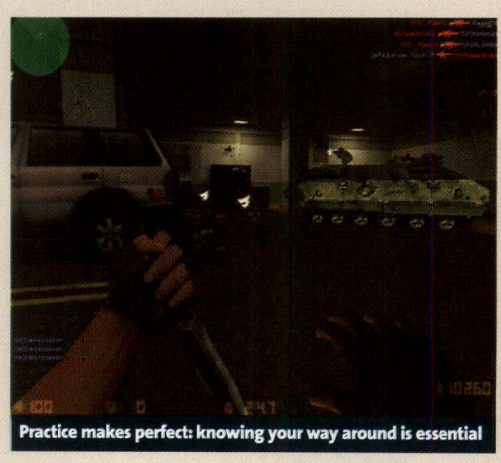
Flight sims are also an oft-overlooked area of online gaming: what might have appeared like pedestrian dogfighting offline can take on a whole new dimension on the Web.

WHAT YOU NEED FOR ONLINE SUCCESS

Gamer's checklist»

THE KIT If you're playing first-person shooters then the most important bit of kit you'll need is a good mouse. If you're looking for the best combination everyday/gaming mouse then use the Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer – an optical mouse offering excellent precision. If you want to use the same mouse as the gaming professionals then you'll need a Razor Boomslang, which offers incredible precision.

THE GAME SETUP Have a look at the monitor of a professional Quake gamer and you might get a bit of a surprise, because they tend to turn all ephemeral graphic detail off. All a pro gammer wants to know is where the other players are and they do this by cranking the detail right down.



Practice makes perfect: knowing your way around is essential

THE KNOWLEDGE As we've mentioned elsewhere, nothing beats knowing the maps and the power-ups. However there are some other general tips for first-person shooters like Quake 3. Never, ever stand still – mobile targets are a lot harder to hit. Think in three dimensions – if you're cornered, the way out may well be up or down. Lead your shots – depending on the weapon you'll have to aim your targeting reticle a bit ahead of your foe.

THE ATTITUDE Nobody likes losing, but there's a difference between wanting to win and being an ungrateful failure. Take the attitude that every game you play teaches you something new about the game and how it's won.

Aces High is typical of the combat flight games online, though if you find its $30 per month subscription steep you could try *Combat Flight Simulator* (***www.microsoft.com/games/combatfs2***) instead.

Still too fast-moving for you? Microsoft's *Zone* (***www.zone.com***) has a huge chess ladder with the ultimate prize of playing Garry Kasparov on offer. Alternatively, Gamesite 2000 (***www.gamesite2000.com***) is a treasure trove of backgammon, reversi and checkers.

KEEP INFORMED

As you can imagine there's a massive network of Web sites dedicated to online gaming in all its different permutations. All the big games have as many as 20 sites dedicated to them, churning out news, features and reviews, and they usually have buoyant forums too.

Probably the best place to start tracking down good games sites is the Gamespy network. These are the guys behind the popular Gamespy 3D utility, but they also host a massive variety of top-notch gaming sites. Of particular interest are 3D Action Planet (***www.3daction planet.com***) and RPG Planet (***www.rpgplanet.com***). They also have the coolest stats page ever – if you've ever wondered what the most popular online game is, see ***www.gamespy.com/stats/index.shtm***. Probably the most up-to-date source for all things games-related is Blues News (***www.bluesnews.com***). This started out life as a *Quake* portal but has expanded to cover just about everything. Another good starting point is Stomped (***www.stomped.com***) which carries general online gaming news.

Experiment with all the weapons on offer and learn to use them

In addition to the general site, you can narrow your aim with some of the outstanding game-specific sites out there too. Try CS-Nation (***csnation.counter-strike.net***) for *Counterstrike*, Tribes Nation (***www.tribesnation.co.uk***) for *Tribes 2* and WFA Arena for *Weapons Factory* (***www.captured.com/weaponsfactory/quake3***). Finally for a good software and hardware reviews site with a games slant see Sharky Extreme (***www.sharkyextreme.com***). Game on.

SPEAK LIKE A PRO WITH OUR A-Z LIST OF TERMS

The dictionary of gaming

■ **BFG** (*abbrev*) Literally, Big F****** Gun (see above). This term first appeared in *Doom* but has since been used to describe any ridiculously large and powerful weapon.

■ **CAMPING** (*vb*) **If you sit in one spot and never move you're a camper, which is fine if you're a sniper (people won't mind the fact that you're so easy to find) but is frowned upon if you're near special power-ups.**

■ **CHAT-KILL** (*n*) There's a gamer's etiquette which indicates that if someone's standing stock-still with their face to the wall, this indicates that they're talking and thus should be left alone. Shoot this person and you'll be branded a chat-killer.

■ **CLANS** (*n pl*) **Groups of gamers get themselves together in clans and play team-based games against other clans in tournaments, leagues and championships.**

■ **EXPLOIT** (*vb*) To take advantage of a bug in a game that wasn't really intended to be there, but which a canny gamer can use wisely.

■ **FRAG** (*n*) **A kill. Also known as a Gib (short for giblets).**

■ **GG** (*abbrev*) Good game – it's considered polite to say this at the end of a game whether you won or not. Go on, manners cost nothing.

■ **HPB** (*abbrev*) **High Ping Bastard – someone (usually on a modem) who has a very high ping (*qv*) and is therefore at a disadvantage to other gamers with lower pings.**

■ **LAG-KILL** (*n*) No connection to the Internet is perfect: they all suffer from moments of lag when you find it difficult to move in the game-world. If someone kills you when you can do nothing about it, it's called a lag-kill.

Guns: getting bigger all the time

■ **LLAMA** (*n*) **Derives (strangely enough) from the word lame. If you're acting like an idiot and behaving in a generally unsociable way then you're a llama. Nothing to do with Michael Jackson.**

■ **LPB** (*abbrev*) Low Ping Bastard – someone (usually on cable or DSL) who has a very low ping (typically around 20) and therefore an advantage over someone on a modem, who has a 200 ping.

■ **NEWBIE** (*n*) **Also newb, newblood – not so much anyone that's totally new to an online game, but someone who's new and who hasn't bothered to read the manual. Often used by stuck-up gaming veterans in a disparaging way.**

■ **PACKET LOSS** (*n*) Often shortened to just PL, packet loss is the gamer's worst nightmare and refers to a 'packet' of information getting lost between you and the server – someone suffering from bad PL looks like they're teleporting around the game map.

■ **PING** (*n*) **The time it takes for a chunk of information to travel from your PC to the server you're playing on and back again. The higher the ping, the less time you'll have to respond to on-screen events. On a 56k modem, 160 is a good ping, on ISDN, 70 is a good ping, on ADSL, 25 is a pretty decent ping.**

■ **RTFM** (*abbrev*) If you join a games server and ask questions that are all perfectly explained in the manual then other players might well say 'RTFM' – 'Read the F****** Manual'.

■ **SPAMMING** (*vb*) **Someone who floods a particular area with lots of explosives, such a grenades or rockets without actually bothering to see if there's anyone there is said to be spamming. Not to be confused with the popular foodstuff.**

■ **TK** (*abbrev*) Team kill – this is the cardinal sin of gaming. If you go around deliberately killing your team-mates (as opposed to the odd little accident, which is fair enough and reasonably acceptable as long as you apologise) then you stand a very good chance of not just getting kicked off the server, but being banned too.

Our top 50 ISPs

July 2001 We tested over 200 UK ISPs to bring you the best performers

ISP NAME	WEB ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	PHONE	EMAIL ADDRESSES
NO MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION You pay as you go, making these perfect for evenings and weekends				
F9 Free	***www.f9.net.uk***	Surftime, ADSL, and the generic free dial-up account for the home user	0800 0737800	Unlimited
Free Online	***www.free-online.net***	Straightforward free ISP offering news and email	0870 7060504	5
Sniff Out	***www.sniffout.net***	Free Internet provider with features, content and technical support	01883 742510	Unlimited
Powergen	***www.pgen.net***	ISP from Powergen, the energy supply company	Sign up online	5
The X-Stream Network	***www.x-stream.com***	Ues on-screen advertising to offer 0800 offers and voice/fax	0870 7306466	1 Unified
Gateway 2000	***www.ukgateway.net***	Family-friendly free ISP with plenty of shareware and gaming	Sign up Online	5
Freenet	***www.freenet.co.uk***	Free access with a gaming bias. Online auto sign-up and newsgroups	01329 828282	Unlimited
Free Internet	***www.free-internet.co.uk***	Free access, free email and Web space	Sign up online	1
Freeserve	***www.freeserve.com***	Free provider from the Dixons group of companies. Surftime available	0990 500049	Unlimited
Smartone	***www.smartone.co.uk***	Content-based service offering free dial-ups and incentives for surfing	08700 774411	1 Unified
Freewire	***www.freewire.net***	Free ISP without any sign-up requirements – dial up to 0845 088 0088	Sign up online	Unlimited
Go Free	***www.gofree.co.uk***	Free ISP offering online sign-up, complete with helpline	Sign up online	Unlimited
Dabsol	***www.dabsol.net***	Free ISP with online sign-up help and comprehensive features	Sign up online	Unlimited
Tiny Online	***www.tinyonline.net***	Innovative ISP with a beginners' guide to the Net	0900 290 9103	5
Breathe	***www.breathe.co.uk***	Recently went into external administration, but still trading as an ISP	0800 500150	5
Virgin Net	***www.virgin.net***	Long-standing ISP now offering a stylish free Internet access service	0500 558800	5
OrbitalNet	***www.orbitalnet.co.uk***	Subscription-based ISP with a range of account options	01233 646505	5
Callnet	***www.callnetuk.com***	Innovative free ISP offering enhanced Web-based services	0207 3358300	5
Eidosnet	***www.eidosnet.co.uk***	From Eidos, publishers of *Tomb Raider* and other games	Sign up online	Unlimited
UK Online Ltd	***www.ukonline.co.uk***	A family-friendly free ISP with plenty of shareware and gaming	01749 333333	1
Wireplay Internet	***www.wireplay.com***	Gameplay-owned with fast access to games servers and the Web	0845 757 7577	0
This is it!	***www.thisisit.co.uk***	End-user targetted free ISP	0906 9124000	Unlimited
UK Fantastic	***www.ukfantastic.net***	Spirited free ISP offering good online technical help	0870 740 7777	Unlimited
MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION Flat-fee packages and specialist ISPs; ideal for peak-time surfing				
Internet In Nottingham Ltd	***www.innotts.co.uk***	Local midlands provider with a long track record	0115 956 2222	1
Paradise Internet	***www.pins.co.uk***	A subscription provider who also author software	01256 414863	1
Aviators Network	***www.aviators.net***	An ISP with aircraft-related content for the pilot and enthusiast	0700 2842867	1
Luna Internet	***www.luna.co.uk***	Small ISP offering virtual servers and Net access. Surftime coming soon	01782 855 655	1
AOL	***www.aol.co.uk***	A large ISP offering value-added services to the home user	0800 3765432	5
Compuserve	***www.compuserve.com***	Long-standing ISP who offer proprietry software	0990 000200	5
ClaraNET Ltd	***www.clara.net***	Subscription-based ISP with a range of account options	0800 3582828	Unlimited
Which? Online	***www.which.net***	A free ISP from the consumer affairs magazine of the same name	0645 830240	1
Demon Internet	***www.demon.co.uk***	The UK's original dial-up account now offers business solutions	0800 4589666	Unlimited
BUSINESS ISPs Service providers for small businesses				
AdeptWeb Ltd	***www.adept.co.uk***	Full ISP service range and ASP service	01843 850444	Unlimited
Firstnet Services Ltd	***www.firstnet.co.uk***	Wide bandwidth ISP/ASP solutions large and small	0113 2944224	Unlimited
Knowall	***www.knowall.net***	Large business ISP attempting to service every need of the SME	0207 6101115	Unlimited
Timewarp Internet	***www.timewarp.co.uk***	ADSL, dial-up and Web site consultancy. New-look site	0161 950 8855	1
CYBERphile Internet	***www.cyberphile.co.uk***	Business-oriented, midlands-based provider. Specialists in leased lines	01543 454840	1
UUNet	***www.uk.uu.net***	Wide range of business solutions and Pipex Dial	08702 424220	12
London Web Comms	***www.londonweb.net***	Business-targetted ISP offering a full range of Internet services	0208 3494500	3
netcib	***www.netcib.co.uk***	Now responsible for the ISP services of Anglianet	01473 211922	1
Netscalibur	***www.netscalibur.co.uk***	Promising pan-European provider taking the place of Dircon	0800 0720000	Unlimited
NewNet Limited	***www.newnet.co.uk***	Five years' experience in the industry	0845 355 44 55	1
Nildram	***www.nildram.net***	Subscription-based ISP with a Low User option plus business packages	0800 0720460	Unlimited
FDD Ltd	***www.fdd.co.uk***	A Netscalibur-aquired company offering IP integration services	01865 321003	1
UKIP Ltd	***www.ukip.co.uk***	Internet consultants offering access and business advice	01772 908000	1
CIX	***www.cix.co.uk***	Specialists in conferencing and voiceover IP solutions for business	0845 3555050	Unlimited
Charis Internet Services	***www.charis.co.uk***	Customer support for online business	0121 248 5800	1
GTS Netcom	***www.netcom.net.uk***	Dial-ups, Web hosting and leased line access for business	0800 9809107	20
UVNET	***www.uv.net***	Free ISP offering support on a standard national number	01753 776699	1
Easynet Ltd	***www.easynet.net***	Subscription-based dial up service.	0207 6814444	Unlimited

KEY **EMAIL ADDRESSES** *The number of free email addresses your ISP will provide.* **CONTENT** *Outlines whether the service provider provides exclusive content.* **MAC SUPPORT** *Not all service providers offer software and tech support for Apple Macs.* **MODEM SUPPORT** *Check your hardware to see whether your ISP can get the best out of your modem.*

Reliability, speed of connection and value for money are the criteria we weigh up to identify the best ISPs and award ratings.

Variation in modem speed
Measures whether you get a constant speed once connected. Each ISP starts with 100 percent and loses points with speed variance.

Variation in time to connect
The reading is taken from the stage between clicking 'Connect' and physical connection.

Availability
Measures how many times an ISP refuses to connect, through the engaged tone or failure to respond correctly to modem signals.

Our ISP testing is carried out by NetBasics, an independent company specialising in providing ISP information for consumers and businesses. NetBasics makes every effort to ensure that the data presented to you here each month is correct.

Thepublishers of *the net* and NetBasics cannot be held liable for any damages caused by the publication of this data. Any ISP that wishes to be included in the evaluation programme, or wishes to amend or verify details in our tables, should email ***eval@netbasics.com***.

For more information on NetBasics, visit its Web site at ***www.netbasics.com***.

CONTENT	MAC SUPPORT	MODEM SUPPORT	SET-UP FEE (£)	MONTHLY CHARGE (£)	PHONE SUPPORT CHARGES	PHONE SUPPORT HOURS	VERDICT: RELIABILITY AND SPEED
None	Yes	V.90, K56Flex, X2	None	None	National	7-11, 7 Days	★★★★★
None	Yes	V.90, K56Flex	None	None	Premium rate	24/7	★★★★★
None	No	V.90, K56Flex	None	None	National rate	24/7	★★★★★
None	No	V.90	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★★★
Chat, news, and a range of channels	No	K56flex	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★★★
Yahoo! portal site	No	V.90	None	None	Metered	24/7	★★★★★
Games links and independent status	Yes	K56Flex, X2	None	None	National rate	9am-6pm, 7 days	★★★★★
Newsgroups & IE5 download	No	V.90	None	None	Metered	24/7	★★★★☆
None	No	V.90	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★★☆
Links of general interest	Yes	V.90	None	None	Metered	9-6 Mon-Sat, 10-5 Sun	★★★★☆
None	No	V.90	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★★☆
None	No	V.90	None	None	Metered	24/7	★★★★☆
None	No	V.90	None	None	Metered	24/7	★★★★☆
Search engine, Hotmail, channels, Tiny PC sales	No	V.90	None	None	Local	24/7	★★★★☆
Entertainment, sport, shopping, finance etc.	Yes	V.90, K56Flex	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★★☆
Virgin channels including news and Web TV	Yes	X2	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★☆☆
None	Yes	V.90, K56Flex	None	None	Local	Business Hours	★★★☆☆
Chat servers, channels and search engine	Yes	K56Flex	None	None	Free	24/7	★★★☆☆
Free access to the Mplayer games network	No	V.90	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★☆☆☆
Comprehensive portal content	Yes	K56Flex	None	None	25p per minute	24/7	★★☆☆☆
Games news, games chat and games add-ons	No	V.90, K56Flex, X2	None	None	50p per minute	12pm – 12 am, 7 days	★★☆☆☆
None	No	K56Flex	None	None	£1 per minute/via email	24/7	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	V.90, K56Flex, X2	None	None	Metered	9am-11pm	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	V.90	None	See Site	Local	24/7	★★★★★
None	Yes	V.90, X2	None	8.00	National	11-7, M-F	★★★★★
Flight planning and navigation	No	K56Flex	None	11.75	Standard	9-9, 7 days	★★★★★
None	Yes	V.90	None	12.50	Local	8am-9pm	★★★★★
Content presented within AOL software	Yes	V.90	None	9.99	Free	8-10.30 M-F, 9-9.30 Sat	★★★★☆
Portal style site with a large range of channels	No	V.90	None	7.50	National	8-12, 7 Days	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	K56Flex, X2	None	8.99	Free	24/7	★★☆☆☆
Online shopping with consumer protection	Yes	K56Flex	None	7.75	Free	24/7	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	V.90, K56Flex, X2	None	11.75	Local	24/7	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	V.90, K65Flex	None	£100 p/a	Local	8.30am-6pm	★★★★★
Search engines and support	Yes	V.90, K56Flex, X2	None	12.50	Local	Business Hours	★★★★★
UK business search and domain registration	No	V.90, K56Flex, X2	None	None	Metered	24/7	★★★★★
None	Yes	V.90	None	100.00 p/a	Metered	9am-7pm	★★★★★
None	Yes	33.6	None	11.74	Standard	8.30am-6pm, M-F	★★★★★
None	No	V.90, K56Flex	Apply	Apply	Apply	9-8 M-F, 10-6 Sat	★★★★★
None	Yes	K56Flex	15.00	12.50	Standard	9-9, M-Sa	★★★★★
None	Yes	V.90	None	11.75	Mobile	9-5 M-F,	★★★★★
None	Yes	K56Flex, X2	None	11.49	Local	9-9, 7days	★★★★★
None	Yes	V.90	None	99.49p/a	Local	9am-10pm	★★★★☆
None	No	V.90, K56Flex	None	11.75	Local	8-9, 7 days	★★★★☆
None	Yes	V.90	None	22 p/a	Free	9am-5.30pm	★★★☆☆
None	Yes	V.90	None	125 p/a	National	8am-6pm	★★★☆☆
None	Yes	V.90	None	14.99	Local	8-10 M-F, 11-6 S/S	★★★☆☆
None	Yes	V.90	None	15.00	Free	8am-7pm	★★☆☆☆
None	No	V.90, K56Flex	None	14.95	National	24/7	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	V.90	None	None	Free	24/7	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	K56Flex	None	11.99	Free	24/7	★★☆☆☆

SET-UP FEE *Some ISPs charge a fee to open an account.* **MONTHLY CHARGE** *If you don't go with a free ISP, then you'll pay a set monthly fee.* **PHONE SUPPORT CHARGES** *Tech support's great – as long as you're not having to pay a fortune for it.* **PHONE SUPPORT HOURS** *When the tech support desk will be open to take your calls.*

Get the Net – by satellite!

It's broadband in the sky as Starspeeder offers UK-wide access for £15 a month

The latest solution for broadband-starved Net users is one of the most ambitious connection ideas yet.

Starspeeder (***www.starspeeder.co.uk***) has officially launched the first UK specific broadband-by-satellite service, promising speeds of approximately 50k/s. The service is available to anyone in the UK, whatever their location – but you do need a satellite dish capable of picking up the Eurosat satellite.

Unlike some other satellite services, the Starspeeder set-up enables you to surf the Internet, use IRC, FTP and newsgroups just as you would with any normal dialup. It can do this thanks to a brand new networking protocol called tunnel-in-the-sky – like virtual private networking but designed specifically for applications like satellite Net access.

Starspeeder charges £15 a month subscription. In addition you'll need a dish (60cm minimum) and a special DVB card that connects your PC to the dish and performs the basic functions of a modem. Windows set-up is a little trickier than dial-up networking, but a clear guide is included on the company's site, along with installation instructions.

We've been following the Web forums since this service went live and user feedback has, on the whole, been very positive. Users have noted that the service is utterly useless for games players, but that download speeds consistently hit the 40k/bs mark, making it comparable to a cable modem.

starspeeder
high speed internet via satellite
home
about starspeeder
starspeeder faq
technical info
support centre
official forum
latest news
register
my account
contact us
looking for a broadband connection but like most of us you're...
nowhere near adsl and can't get cable?
it's here!
up to 400k/sec
for only £15 +vat per month
Welcome to starspeeder.co.uk - official site for high speed internet via satellite. Here you'll find everything you need to know about what exactly Starspeeder IS, how it works, what equipment you need to access it, the availability and just how EASY it is to get connected!
With Starspeeder you'll be able to download files from the internet, IRC, FTP, newsgroups and all other standard protocols at 400kbit/sec (around 40-50kb/sec) which is almost as fast as ADSL and CABLE but for a third of the price of ADSL and half the price of cable and it's all done through your satellite dish without the need for an ADSL enabled exchange or cable access.
Q. What is Starspeeder?
A. A very fast Internet connection via Satellite. Starspeeder connects you to the Internet at speeds of up to 400Kbits/sec. Monthly cost is £15.00 plus UK VAT - (£52.88 Quarterly) For more detailed information go to our about page.
Q. What's needed?
A. PC - Win98 / ME / NT / 2000, Linux, 64Mb RAM, 100Mb free disc space. Modem or ISDN connection, DVB Card eg. Pentamedia or Hauppage, 60cm Dish / Digital LNB aligned on Europe*Star 45 degrees East.
Q. Where can I get the hardware??
A. Visit the Trac Web page http://www.traccomms.com From the Product Category list box Select "Sat Internet" for a special deal on all the hardware!
To be advised of future Starspeeder information please join the Starspeeder UK mailing list! Enter your email address below, then click the "Join List" button
joinlist
design ©2001 centinal
tuesday may 01 2001

AOL to offer ADSL access for first time

ALL NEW
Make Web pages appear 5,000% FASTER!
Instant on! No more dialing up!
Easy to use!
Boost your speed up to 5,000%
YES! I WANT SUPERFAST AOL!
Tell Me More | General FAQs
Keyword: AOL Plus

The largest ISP in the world, AOL, is preparing the launch of a new ADSL product called AOL Plus. The service is going to cost £49 a month and will include free technical support and free installation. Pretty much every other ADSL provider charges a fairly hefty sum (anywhere up to £250) to install ADSL, so for AOL to waive that fee is fairly impressive.

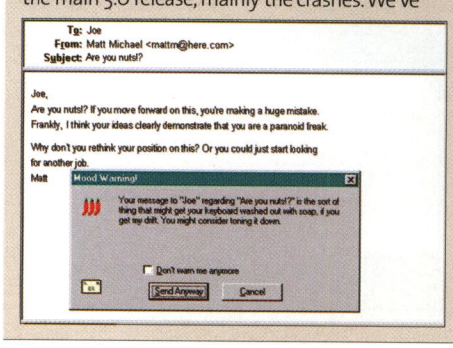
While £49 is a steep charge in comparison with other services, AOL wields huge clout and there's little doubt that the launch will have a massive impact on the profile of broadband Internet access. Moreover, thanks to their merger with TimeWarner AOL has a vast amount of material that can be streamed via the ADSL connection to homes, bypassing traditional broadcasters.

NET-FRIENDLY PACKAGES AND DOWNLOADS

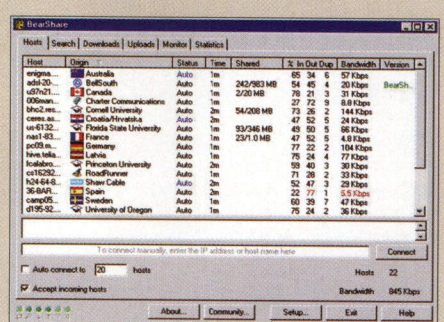
THE MONTH'S TOP SOFTWARE »

Such is the dominance of Microsoft that many people never consider the alternatives. So if you've ever sworn at Outlook or Outlook Express and wished there some other way of working then perhaps you should check out Eudora (***www.eudora.com***). Recently updated to version 5.1, Eudora is much more robust than Outlook and offers just as many features. You can import your old email into Eudora and then make use of its advanced feature-set including Moodwatch, which can monitor and alert the user to offensive language in emails and an interface that can be tweaked to look the way you like.

Another application that keeps getting better and better is the Opera Web browser (***www.opera.com***). The most recent release (5.10) addresses a number of problems we had with the main 5.0 release, mainly the crashes. We've


To: Joe
From: Matt Michael <mattm@here.com>
Subject: Are you nuts!?
Joe,
Are you nuts!? If you move forward on this, you're making a huge mistake.
Frankly, I think your ideas clearly demonstrate that you are a paranoid freak.
Why don't you rethink your position on this? Or you could just start looking for another job.
Matt
Mood Warning!
Your message to "Joe" regarding "Are you nuts!?" is the sort of thing that might get your keyboard washed out with soap, if you get my drift. You might consider toning it down.
Don't warn me anymore
Send Anyway
Cancel

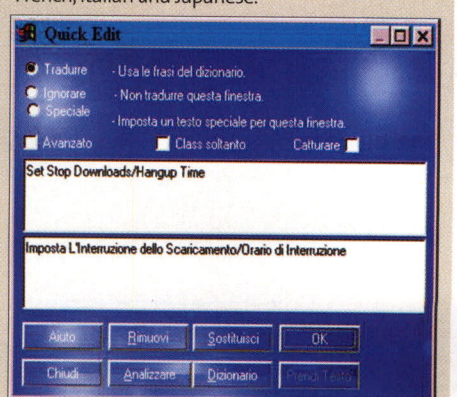
road-tested the latest version and are happy to report that it's now perfectly stable. The new version also includes a funky new navigation system, skins support (change the entire interface) and improved window handling.



If you're missing Napster and its vast database of users, then you'll find a large number of alternatives, but the most promising are based on the Gnutella shared-file network. Our favourites are Bearshare and Limewire, both of which enable you to tap into a network of music files, but also movie clips and pictures. The Gnutella system is a fair bit slower than Napster (because there's no central server controlling it) but it has just as many files circulating on it – you can download all the relevant clients at Gnutellium (***www.gnutelliums.com***).

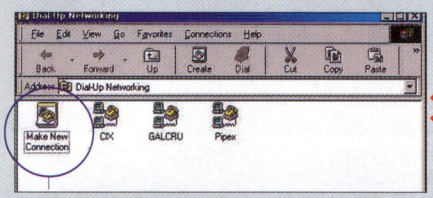
Modem users will know the pain that comes from engaged tones – connecting to an over-subscribed ISP can be a nightmare as it takes so long to redial. Programs like SuperDial 2000 (***www.superdial.f2s.com***) are ideal for this situation because they can do automatic redials, automatic reconnect, keep alive (stops your line from getting dropped) and will even monitor your online time.

Finally, if you've recommended an application to someone abroad, only to discover that it's not available in their language, then you need Lingoware (***www.lingoware.com***). This amazing little gizmo translates the interface of any application into one of 12 languages, including French, Italian and Japanese.

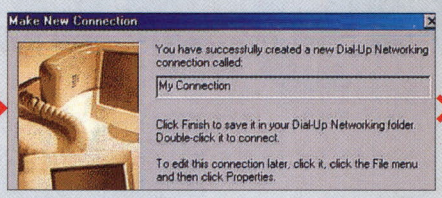


WHY BE AT THE MERCY OF ONE CONNECTION?

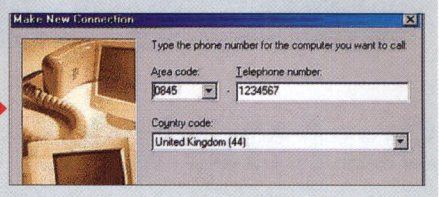
HOW TO SWITCH ISPS IN SECONDS»



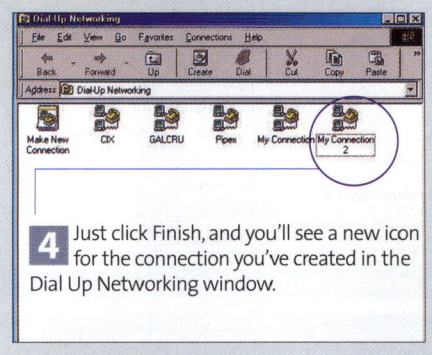
1 To make your new connection, go Start > Programs > Accessories > Communications > Dial Up Networking. Then just click the 'make new connection' icon.


Make New Connection
You have successfully created a new Dial-Up Networking connection called:
My Connection
Click Finish to save it in your Dial-Up Networking folder. Double-click it to connect.
To edit this connection later, click it, click the File menu and then click Properties.

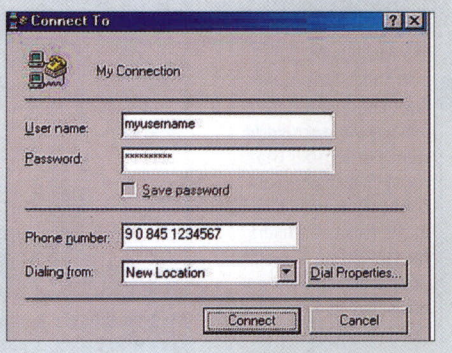
2 Start by typing in your intended ISP's name (your PC should automatically choose your modem), then click Next.



3 Now type in the new ISP's telephone number (you'll get this just by calling them and asking) and make sure you choose the correct country to show where you're dialling from.



4 Just click Finish, and you'll see a new icon for the connection you've created in the Dial Up Networking window.

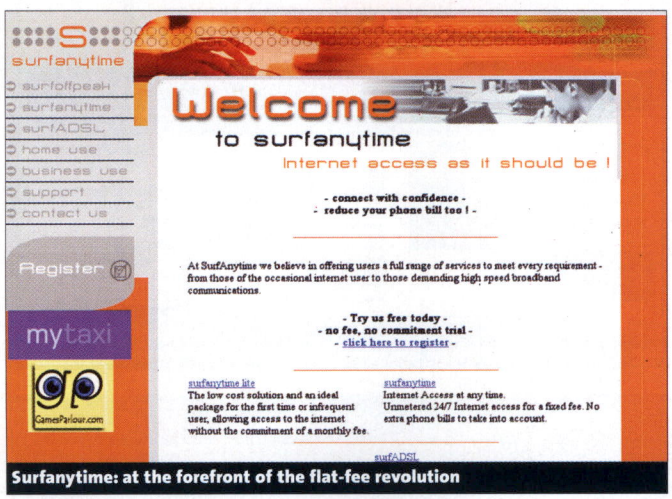


TOP TIPS

Copy the new connections onto your desktop. That way, when one ISP won't connect, you can simply switch to another one in seconds, rather than having to navigate back to the Dial Up Networking window.

5 Double-click the new icon to access the window into which you should input the username and password supplied by the new ISP. Hit 'connect', and dialling should begin...

0800 access gets serious


surfanytime
surfoffpeak
surfanytime
surfADSL
home use
business use
support
contact us
Register
mytaxi
GamesParlour.com
Welcome
to surfanytime
Internet access as it should be !
- connect with confidence -
- reduce your phone bill too ! -
At SurfAnytime we believe in offering users a full range of services to meet every requirement - from those of the occasional internet user to those demanding high speed broadband communications.
- Try us free today -
- no fee, no commitment trial -
- click here to register -
surfanytime lite
The low cost solution and an ideal package for the first time or infrequent user, allowing access to the internet without the commitment of a monthly fee.
surfanytime
Internet Access at any time. Unmetered 24/7 Internet access for a fixed fee. No extra phone bills to take into account.
surfADSL

Surfanytime: at the forefront of the flat-fee revolution

Now that BT has finally been forced to offer competitively priced services to ISPs, we're starting to see massive growth in the flat-fee dialup market.

Over the course of the last month services such as 08002go (***www.08002go.net***), Silvermead (***www.silvermead.net***), 4TheNET (***www.4thenet.co.uk/unlimited***), TotalServe (***www.totalserve.co.uk***), FreeChariot (***www.freechariot.co.uk***), SupaNet (***www.supanet.com***), EcosseTel (***www.ecossetel.net***), BigBlueSky (***www.bigbluesky.uk.net***), Surfanytime (***www.surfanytime.co.uk***) and others have all launched and there's no reason to believe there won't be plenty more to come.

Of course the problem is that whilst there's now some genuine choice in the market, the service offered by these companies will vary enormously and we have no doubt that many of them will go bust trying to compete. So if you're planning on signing up with these companies, our advice is to plump for ones that enable you to pay on a monthly basis so that you only lose about £15 if they go titsup.com.

But it's hard not to feel happy about the situation. For too long UK Internet users have had to pay huge per-minute dialup charges and the emergence of all these flat-fee ISPs enables users to shop around for the right blend of services.

Net Basics
The Internet in Focus
ISP Directory

Blow through the mist surrounding Internet Service Provision with desktop software designed by NetBasics, the leading ISP industry research organisation.

The ISP Directory features over 100 key facts and pricing information for nearly 200 UK ISPs including every industry leader.

For further info, visit:
www.netbasics.com

Net Basics™
NetBasics, The Internet in Focus
info@netbasics.com
Telephone 0113 246 0009 in the UK

Getting started

Surf the Web

SIMPLE, THIS. YOU NEED A computer (commonly a PC running Microsoft Windows, but some people use strange things called Apple Macintoshes), a means of connecting to the Internet (a modem device usually built into the computer, plus an account to dial in to) and a means of seeing the Web pages (that's a browser).

BROWSERS Usually free of charge and pre-installed on new PCs. If not, you can download one from the Internet (use your employer's network; it'll be cheaper and quicker) or from a CD (you'll find them in magazines like this one). Current champion is Microsoft's Internet Explorer (***www.microsoft.com/windows/ie***), but lagging not far behind is Netscape's reliable, adaptable and recently much-improved Navigator (***home.netscape.com/uk/download***). However, there are many 'rebel' browsers either designed for a specific computing platform or boasting strength at a particular function (see below).

NET CONNECTION Most modern PCs come with a built-in modem, a device that will dial your Internet Service Provider (see p106) and connect you to the Internet. Most modems these days run at 56K; OK, but hardly rapid fire. If you want to go quicker, you'll need to look at either 64K/128K ISDN, eg BT's Home Highway, or else 10Mbps ADSL (a permanent, zip-quick connection; for details see ***www.btopenworld.com***). Remember that most ISPs charge for connection, either in the form of a fixed fee (say £9.99 a month) or on a pay-as-you-go basis (say 1p a minute). Consider at what times you surf most and exactly how much before choosing your tariff.

TOP TIP

Handy favourites

If you use Internet Explorer, save yourself some surfing time by keeping your five favourite sites close by at all times – type in an address you want to keep, then drag and drop the Explorer icon to the left of the address into the menu bar below. It'll be there every time you surf...

YOUR COMPUTER Virtually every modern PC is quick enough to handle the software required to surf the Internet. Your only choice really is platform: while most plump for PCs running Microsoft Windows, recent years have seen a resurgence in the fortunes of the Apple Mac (mostly thanks to the cutesy iMac). Needless to say, new Internet software is written for PC first, Mac some time after – and the huge and growing online gaming industry is virtually built around PC.

Explorer 5.5: plain grey in PC guise; functional but extremely solid

New Netscape 6.01: colourful and funky, and now said to be more stable

BORED WITH EXPLORER OR NETSCAPE?

BROWSER ALTERNATIVES>>

PC BROWSERS

BROWSER	RATING	FOR	AGAINST	DOWNLOAD FROM
AMAYA	★★☆☆☆	Great for those into Net standards...	...not for those who aren't	*www.w3.org/Amaya/User/BinDist.html*
ARACHNE	★★☆☆☆	It runs in DOS and is written by Czechs	A pain to set up	*arachne.cz*
CUSTOM BROWSER	★☆☆☆☆	Adds minimal extra customisation to IE	It's just IE with an ad in the top panel	*www.custombrowser.com*
HOTJAVA	★★☆☆☆	Pretty showcase for Java technology	Slow, though not as bad as on the Mac	*java.sun.com/products/hotjava/3.0*
INTERNET EXPLORER	★★★★★	For the moment, the king of all browsers	Hard to fault, unless you really try	*www.microsoft.com/windows/ie*
LYNX	★★★★☆	The original text-only browser	If it isn't text, Lynx isn't interested	*lynx.browser.org*
MOSAIC	★★★☆☆	Good for developers	Feels old. Is old. Not updated since 1996	*www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Software/mosaic-w*
NEOPLANET	★★★★☆	Funky interface replacement for Explorer	Internet Explorer in new clothes	*www.neoplanet.com*
NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR 6	★★★★☆	Wide range of features for hardcore users	Doesn't display pages as prettily as IE	*www.netscape.co.uk*
OPERA	★★★★☆	Faster than IE or Netscape	Bit of a stickler for standards	*www.opera.com*
MSN EXPLORER	★★★★☆	Easy to use, integrates with PIM functions	Right now, it's US-only content	*msn.explorer.com*
MAC BROWSERS				
ICAB	★★★★☆	Fast. Gets rid of irritating ad banners	Could support more features	*www.icab.de*
INTERNET EXPLORER 5.0	★★★★★	State-of-the-art browsing on the Mac	Can be memory-hungry	*www.microsoft.com/Mac/ie*
NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR 6.01	★★★★★	Packed with features; look can be themed	Has .01 update made it less buggy?	*www.netscape.com*
OPERA FOR MAC	★★★★☆	Fast; offers tons of control over page look	Still in 'Technology Preview' guise	*www.opera.com/download/mac*

Send and receive email

EMAIL: THE STUFF THAT HAS THE Royal Mail quivering in its boots (after all, who sends letters any more?). But before you can enjoy the visceral thrills of sending mail instantly through cyberspace (80 percent of email apparently makes it to its recipient within five minutes) you'll need an address and a means of sending and receiving your post.

The former you can get either by signing up with an Internet Service Provider (or ISP, see page 106), getting one from your employer (many firms now have big networks and will afford you a name as part of the job), or through one of the Web-based email service providers (such as Yahoo!, Hotmail, excite, etc). But what are the pros and cons of each option?

WEB-BASED EMAIL Dead handy if you travel a lot; once you have your password after signing up, you can check your mail from any Internet café or any place with an Internet-linked PC.

Some Web-based email service providers even offer the facility to forward and send mail through such desktop software as Microsoft Outlook or Eudora. The catch? Many have a rather clumsy interface, and sending and receiving mail can be slow, especially when America wakes up in the morning and logs on. Make sure you keep a duplicate of your address book and favourites on your hard drive, otherwise if your Web-based account goes down, so do all your contact details. If you fancy checking it out, you can start an account at ***www.yahoo.co.uk***, or head along to either ***www.hotmail.com*** or ***www.excite.co.uk***.

YOUR SERVICE PROVIDER When you sign up with an ISP, you'll be given at least one email address to use, and most will even provide the email software you need to get started (which is usually Outlook, although do remember that you're rarely stuck with it; you can choose any from between the leading packages outlined in the column to the right).

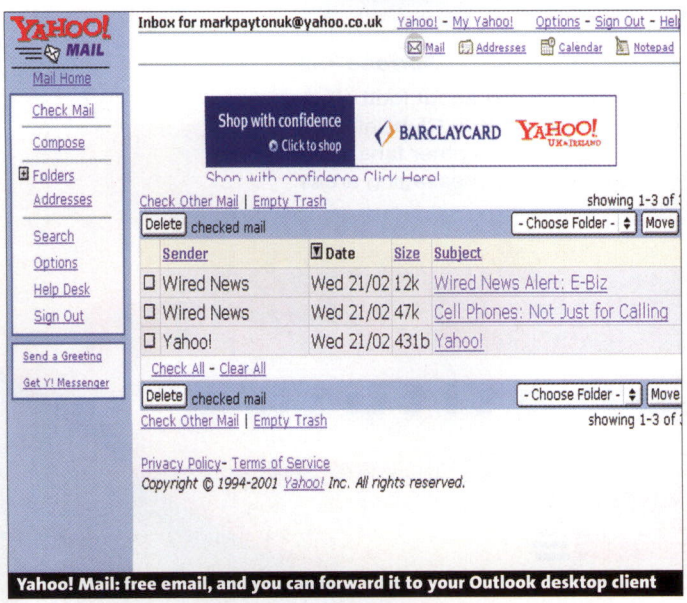
The catch? You may find it difficult to read email from these accounts at your workplace, unless you can be bothered to manually forward mail to yourself for the next day, which could prove a tiring process.

YOUR EMPLOYER This usually means using whatever software your employer provides (which is invariably the networked version of Outlook), and you can't access your email from home using your own PC (unless your bosses love you enough to set you up there as well). The upside? It's all free of charge.

TOP TIP

Stop the spam

There's nothing more annoying than being bombarded with junk email from companies you've never heard of. Fortunately, Hotmail and several major ISPs have now begun implementing a 'Bulk Email' service, in which any bulk emails you receive are kept in a seperate folder ready for instant deletion. Ask your ISP for details of how to get this service working.

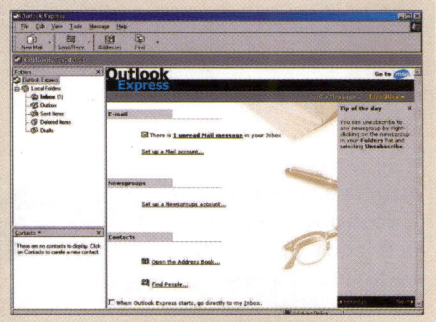


Yahoo! Mail: free email, and you can forward it to your Outlook desktop client

ARE THE RIGHT PEOPLE HANDLING YOUR POST?

EMAIL CLIENTS>>

Microsoft Outlook Express 5 ★★★★☆

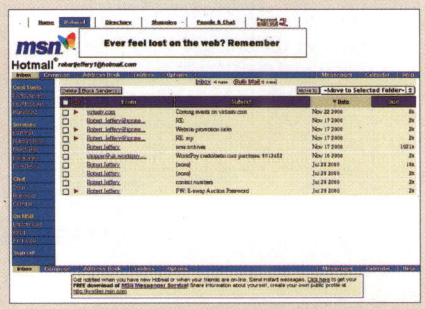


If your PC came with IE5+, you're most likely already using Express 5. And that's a good thing: the latest Outlook is easy to use and set up, and now features such useful extras as Hotmail support (you can download your Hotmail messages for working offline, or synch your Hotmail and Express address books). And with so many families now having individual email addresses, Outlook makes setting up individual accounts fuss free. Available for both PC and Mac, the download is at ***www.microsoft.com/windows/oe***.

Eudora 5.0 ★★★★★

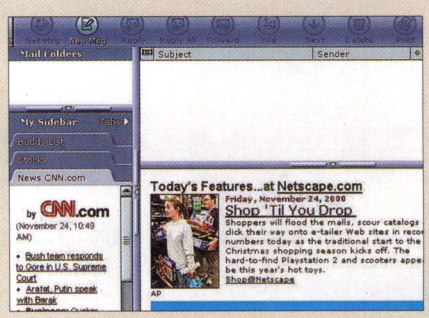
Launched back in September, the latest Eudora is available in Paid ($49.95), Sponsored and Light modes. Both of the latter can be grabbed free from ***www.eudora.com***. While Light is stripped down, Sponsored features advertising. Either way, the Eudora package is excellent; the interface is attractive and intuitive, while the package integrates well with the address book. 5.0 even includes a novel 'MoodWatcher' – a feature that affords mail a 'red chilli pepper' rating according to the strength of its 'inflammatory' language.

MSN Hotmail ★★★★☆



The web-based service that got the whole ball rolling. Sign up for a free account, and get an email address and a password. There's a 2Mb limit on your inbox, and an Inbox Protector to fight off spam mail. The Hotmail Alert service will notify your pager or mobile telephone of incoming messages. Sign up at ***www.hotmail.com***, or try either ***www.yahoo.co.uk*** or ***www.excite.co.uk*** instead; the services are all pretty similar.

Netscape Mail ★★★★☆



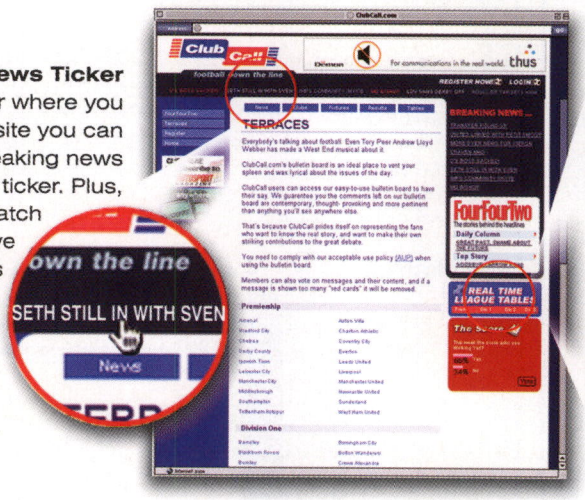
Now bundled in with the new Netscape 6 browser, Mail runs Outlook Express neck-and-neck; as with the Microsoft product, there's full integration with its built-in address book. True to the philosophy of the 6 browser, the themed Mail interface tries to pack in as much 'user friendliness' as possible. The 'My Sidebar' feature, for example, is carried over from the browser. Don't forget to go grab the latest, de-bugged update to 6 (6.01) from ***www.netscape.com***.

In a league of its own

The latest news from the Premiership and Nationwide League
When it comes to football web sites, it doesn't get much better than this. ClubCall.com provides football fans with in-depth daily coverage of all 92 clubs.

'Flick Football'
Play 'Flick Football', the brilliant new game from ClubCall.com, requiring all the skill and precision of table football. Challenge your mates to a game live on-line or via e-mail. It's great fun and easy to play - just click to flick!

Live News Ticker
No matter where you are on the site you can get all the breaking news from the live ticker. Plus, during match action the live ticker keeps you informed of all the scores.



RealTime League
Club Call
REAL TIME LEAGUE TABLE
Premier League
P W D L DIF PT
1. Arsenal 9 4 3 2 1 15
2. Leeds Utd 8 3 5 0 8 14
3. Aston V 10 1 8 1 0 11
4. Liverpool 7 1 6 0 3 9
5. Ipswich 8 1 6 1 0 9
6. Bradford 8 0 8 0 0 8
7. Sunderl'd 8 0 8 0 0 8
8. Charlton 7 0 7 0 0 7
9. Coventry 7 0 7 0 0 7
10. Midd'sbro 7 0 7 0 0 7
11. Newcastle 7 0 7 0 0 7
12. Spurs 7 0 7 0 0 7
13. West Ham 7 0 7 0 0 7
14. Leicester 6 1 4 1 -1 7
15. Derby 8 0 7 1 -1 7
16. Everton 8 0 7 1 -1 7
17. Man. Utd 8 0 7 1 -1 7
18. S'hampton 7 0 6 1 -1 6
19. Man. City 7 0 6 1 -4 6
20. Chelsea 6 0 5 1 -1 5

Real-Time League Tables
Experience the unique pop-up Real-Time League Tables and watch the clubs move up and down the league with each goal scored.

E-mail News Bulletins
Register with ClubCall.com to receive e-mail updates direct from the editor giving you the latest news as the stories break.

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Newsgroups

Whatever topic tickles your fancy, there'll be a newsgroup dedicated to it on the Net. Here's how to join up

Newsgroups are one of the older services on the Internet. Each group is like a bulletin board – anyone can post messages to different newsgroups, and anyone can read the postings. There are tens of thousands of different newsgroup subjects available, so there will be one that matches your interests, whether you're looking for info on beekeeping or book-keeping, computers or comics, sewing or sailing.

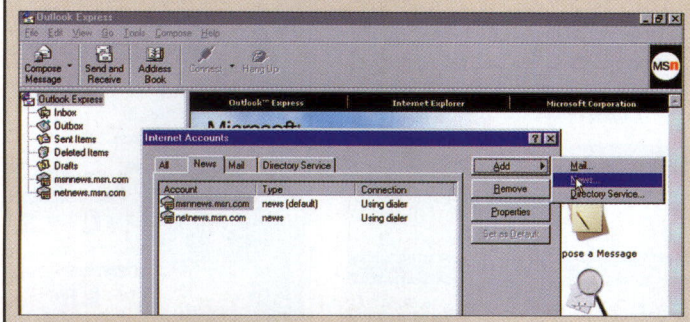
Although the Web has plenty of information on most subjects, newsgroups will often provide more detailed answers to questions. If you have a question on a specific subject, you can receive half a dozen responses in two hours. The most famous newsgroup system is Usenet. This is structured like a tree, with a few large branches and thousands of smaller ones. The large branches are top-level discussion categories, such as rec (recreation), which contain smaller branches, such as rec.art. These categories contain messages themselves but are also broken down further into even more specific branches, such as rec.arts.comics, which contain messages from people who are interested in that topic.

If you don't want to go to the bother of configuring Outlook Express or other newsgroup access software, visit DejaNews ***www.deja.com*** – a Web-based interface to newsgroups. You can read and send messages from here, all via your Web browser. Simple.

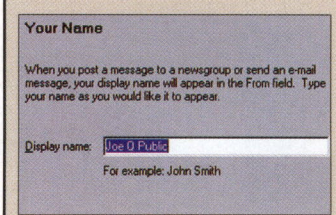
Your ISP will provide you with its own news server access, or visit ***esalesbiz.com/web/nntplst.htm*** which links to hundreds of free access news servers. To add more servers to Outlook Express, go through the setting-up steps outlined below.

ACCESSING NEWSGROUPS USING OUTLOOK EXPRESS

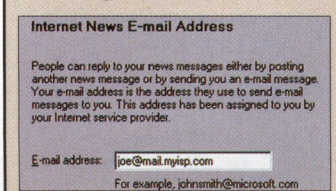
STEP BY STEP>>



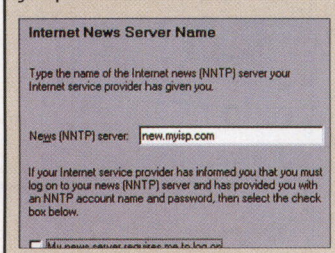
1 Go to the Accounts entry in the Tools menu, click on the News tab to list your current news accounts (if any), hit Add and choose News.


Your Name
When you post a message to a newsgroup or send an e-mail message, your display name will appear in the From field. Type your name as you would like it to appear.
Display name:
Joe O Public
For example: John Smith

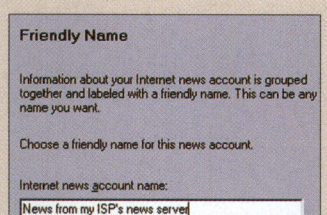
2 Type in your name. This will be displayed in any message you post to a newsgroup. Then hit Next.


Internet News E-mail Address
People can reply to your news messages either by posting another news message or by sending you an e-mail message. Your e-mail address is the address they use to send e-mail messages to you. This address has been assigned to you by your Internet service provider.
E-mail address:
joe@mail.myisp.com
For example, johnsmith@microsoft.com

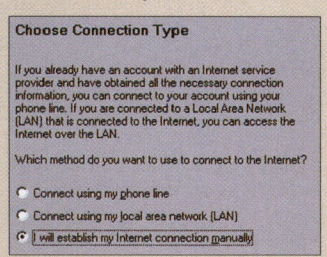
3 Type in your email address. This will be displayed in any message you post. Then click Next.


Internet News Server Name
Type the name of the Internet news (NNTP) server your Internet service provider has given you.
News (NNTP) server:
new.myisp.com
If your Internet service provider has informed you that you must log on to your news (NNTP) server and has provided you with an NNTP account name and password, then select the check box below.

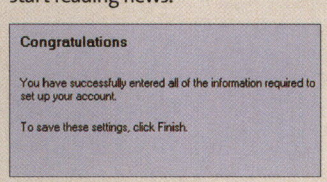
4 Enter the name of your ISP's server, which should be given in your user documentation.


Friendly Name
Information about your Internet news account is grouped together and labeled with a friendly name. This can be any name you want.
Choose a friendly name for this news account.
Internet news account name:
News from my ISP's news server

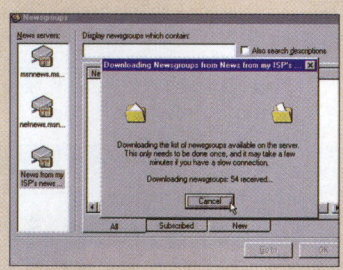
5 Give the news server a name that makes sense to you.


Choose Connection Type
If you already have an account with an Internet service provider and have obtained all the necessary connection information, you can connect to your account using your phone line. If you are connected to a Local Area Network (LAN) that is connected to the Internet, you can access the Internet over the LAN.
Which method do you want to use to connect to the Internet?
Connect using my phone line
Connect using my local area network (LAN)
I will establish my Internet connection manually

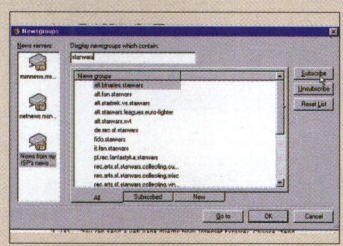
6 Tell Outlook Express that you will dial your ISP manually before you start reading news.


Congratulations
You have successfully entered all of the information required to set up your account.
To save these settings, click Finish.

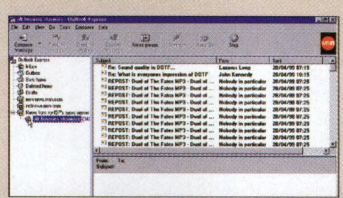
7 And you're done! You have now set up a newsgroup access account. Now let's see how to use it.


Downloading Newsgroups from News from my ISP's ...
Downloading the list of newsgroups available on the server. This only needs to be done once, and it may take a few minutes if you have a slow connection.
Downloading newsgroups: 54 received...
Cancel

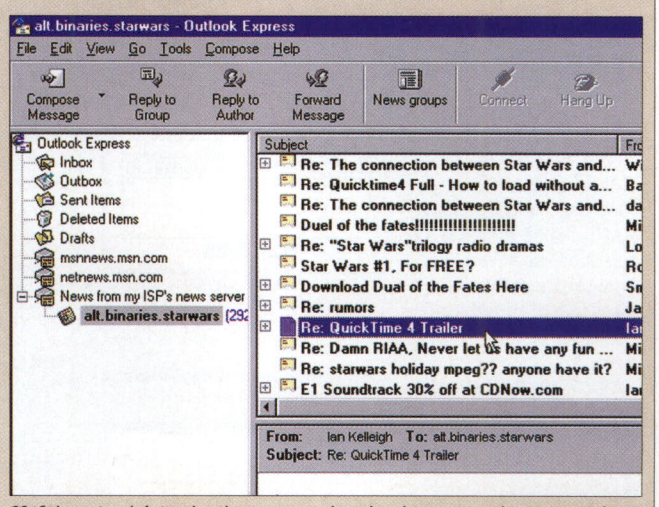
8 After hitting Close, you're asked if you want to download your ISP's list of newsgroups. When you click Yes, the list will be downloaded, so make sure you're online. This can take up to 10 minutes when you first connect, because you are downloading the names of thousands of newsgroups.



9 Once all the newsgroups are downloaded, you can explore. If you want to find *Star Wars* postings, for example, type 'starwars' into the text field at the top of the window to display all newsgroups containing that word. You can subscribe to as many groups as you want. -



10 To access a message inside a newsgroup, click on the subject header to read a summary. Double click the header and the whole message downloads, appearing on the lower half of the screen.



11 If there is a '+' sign by the message header this means there are replies which you can also read. Click on the '+' sign to see the list of replies.

Online chat

How to hold virtual conversations with friends and strangers, experts and celebrities

Online chat lets you communicate with other people, often in real time. In other words, you type in comments, send them over the Net and they're seen almost immediately. And you're only paying for a local phone call, even if you are 'talking' to someone on the other side of the world.

You can 'chat' with friends and relatives in other countries without running up massive phone bills. Or join in an online discussion on your favourite subject with an expert.

There's the opportunity to ask a celebrity questions during a moderated 'conference', or talk to complete strangers on the other side of the world.

'Smileys' are a way of including an indication of emotion in your messages. They are useful when, for example, you are making a joke and you want to be sure that the recipient realises you're not being serious. Hang a relevant smiley on the end of your sentence by typing in the relevant characters, but do try not to over-use them. To 'read' them, just turn the page 90 degrees to the right ;-) Got it? Here are the four most used smileys:

- **:-)** The original smiley. Indicates a joke, or just a happy person!
- **;-)** Wink
- **:-o** Shock (an open mouth)
- **:-(** Unhappy

Don't register your details with a site unless you really want to. Often chat software will ask for your name and other info. Be wary; you don't know what it'll be used for.

If you are looking for romance online, use caution. Don't reveal your home address and if you decide to meet up, make sure someone knows where you're going, as you would if meeting someone from a magazine or newspaper ad.

If text chat seems a bit flat, try 3D chat, where users take on a 'persona' and actually walk round chat rooms. Try ***www.virtualzones.com*** for starters.

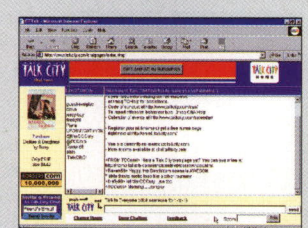
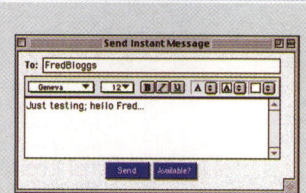
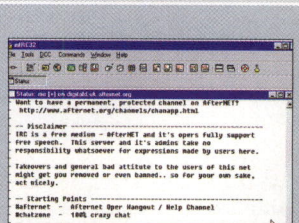
TOP TIP

Ad enough?

Tired of ads interrupting your chat sessions? Then try Odigo, a piece of freeware available from *www.odigo.com* which organises your contacts in AOL, ICQ, Yahoo! and MSN chats and lets you connect without having to sit through adverts. An indispensable piece of software.

THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SPEAK TO THE WORLD...

CHAT CHOICES>>

TYPE OF CHAT		FOR & AGAINST	CHAT LINK
LIVE ON A WEB SITE Takes place within the window of your browser on a Web site. Messages come up instantly and can be seen by everyone who is viewing that Web page.		**FOR** Easy to use; no extra software required to run it. **AGAINST** Works on someone's Web site, so the subject will be dictated by them and private chat is unlikely.	***www.talkcity.com*** Online community where you can talk on various subjects, including romance and current affairs.
MODERATED SESSIONS Moderated chats are 'supervised' by a chat room host, who decides whether or not to allow your comments or questions to be displayed. This is the norm for celebrity chats.		**FOR** Discussions are sensibly run. Abusive or annoying people may be screened out. **AGAINST** Only take place at certain times because they require a moderator to be present on the site. Censorship.	***www.chat.beeb.com*** The BBC's celebrity chat service with daily visits from the network's top stars.
REAL-TIME USING EXTRA SOFTWARE Software like AOL's Instant Messenger and ICQ allow you to chat in real time. You don't use a Web browser; the software takes care of everything.		**FOR** Instant response; ability to chat privately to one person. **AGAINST** Requires extra software. Some firms don't allow this to be installed on their PCs, so you may not be able to chat at work.	***www.aol.co.uk/aim*** ***www.icq.com*** Chat one-to-one with your friends in real time on the Net.
IRC IRC (Internet Relay Chat) software lets you talk to many people at once. It can be a pain to use, however; it was, after all, modelled on CB radio.		**FOR** Useful, technical chats are often held on IRC channels. **AGAINST** Software is difficult to use; IRC users can be impatient with newcomers.	***www.mirc.com*** Although it can be tricky to get used to, mIRC is the best software for IRC chat. ***www.ircle.com*** IRC client for Macs.

THIS MONTH'S HAPPENING SITES

Explore some of the subjects featured in this month's *the net*...

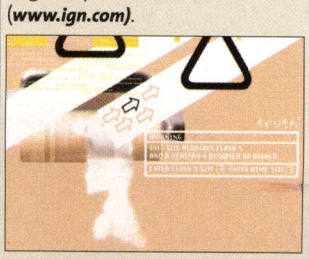
Planning to **get hitched?** Chat with others at Wedding Chat (***www.weddingchat.com***).

Adventure sports fanatics should share their passion at ***www.rockclimbing.com***

Chat while you listen to the **radio** thanks to Radio 1's site (***www.bbc.co.uk/radio1***)

Looking for a **record deal**? So are the other hopefuls at Garageband (***www.garageband.com***).

Make sure your **gaming** knowledge is up-to-date at IGN (***www.ign.com***).



Trying to give up **smoking?** You'll find advice and support at ***www.thetruth.com***

Flick Football

exclusively from www.clubcall.com

click to flick

Everyone's playing 'Flick Football', the exciting new game from www.clubcall.com, requiring all the skill and precision of real football. Challenge your mates to a game live on-line or via e-mail. It's great fun and easy to play, just visit www.clubcall.com

Get all the latest news, in-depth coverage of all 92 clubs and real-time league tables on

www.clubcall.com

ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES

Club Call

Stay virus-free

They can ruin your PC in minutes – so our guide to spotting and stopping them could save you a mint

THEY CAN TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR email book and send themselves to your friends and colleagues, they can infiltrate your computer and let hackers rummage about on your hard drive, they can infest your computer's BIOS and stop it starting and if you catch a really nasty one it can format your hard drive – erasing not only itself but all your data in one fell swoop. Computer viruses, it's fair to say, are nasty things.

Viruses come in myriad shapes and forms. They can arrive on the boot sector of a harmless-looking floppy disk or an email attachment from a trusted friend. They can attach themselves to your hard drive or infect Microsoft Word and all the documents you produce with it. And it's not just Windows users who can get them (although this is far and away the most susceptible group) – Linux, Palm handheld and even Apple Mac computers are all open to virus attack.

You should probably be very worried about the potential effects of a virus on your computer – people have lost their life's work because of the wretched things. The good news is that as long as you're sensible, and as long as you follow a few basic guidelines, it's virtually impossible to pick one up....

A BRIEF HISTORY

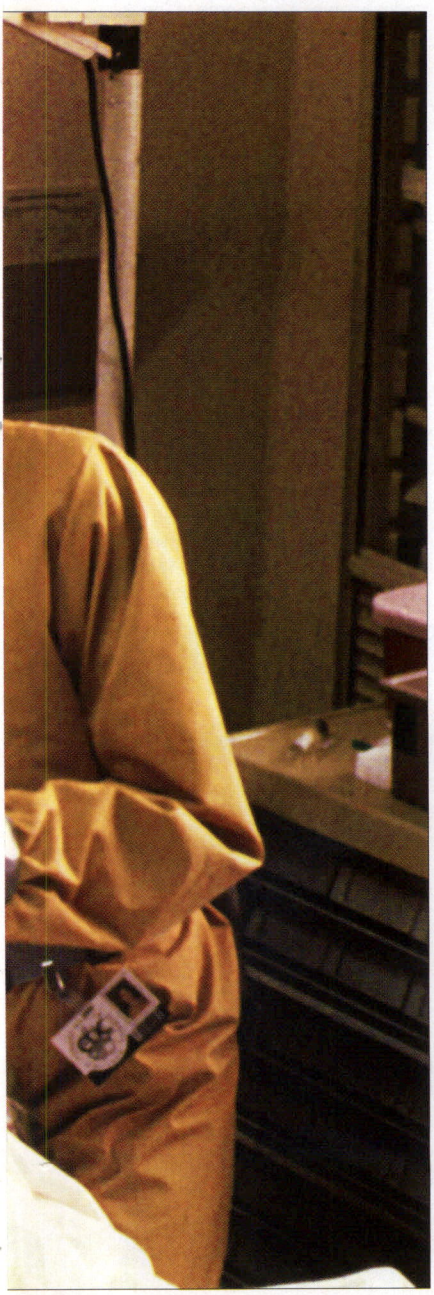
The very first PC virus emerged in 1988. It was called the Brain virus and it came from Lahore in Pakistan

PICTURES: KOBAL, CORBIS

– we can state its origins with complete confidence, because the authors kindly included their names and email addresses in it. The author of the virus was upset at people copying an application he'd written for doctors – an infected machine would add a copyright notice to any floppy disk inserted into the PC.

Mac users claim their computers were first with a lot of things and that's certainly true of viruses. The first Mac virus was a commercial macro utility in 1985 which would put its macro files on every floppy you inserted into your drive. However, the first full blown virus was Scores, which emerged in 1988.

And just so all those handheld computer users didn't feel left out the virus authors decided to start targeting them too. The first Palm virus emerged in August 2000; this file pretended to be a game called Liberty, but was actually a Trojan (a file pretending to be something else) which deleted important files.



As the years have gone by the virus authors have been getting increasingly sophisticated in their programming and dissemination techniques. The Anna Kournikova virus, for instance, spread itself by means of email, attaching itself to an infected computer's Microsoft Outlook program and emailing itself to every entry in the address book.

VERY BAD THINGS

Such is the hysteria surrounding viruses that most people have very little idea what they actually do. Just like real viruses that affect all mammals, they range in severity. Some are little more than glorified hoaxes – they might say they're going to format your hard drive but in reality they simply stick a stupid message up on screen.

However some viruses really are nasty blighters. There are viruses kicking about which will overwrite your BIOS and then zap your hard drive. The CIH virus, for instance, which first emerged in 1998, will overwrite the hard disk and flash (erase) the BIOS of an infected computer, causing complete loss of data and possibly rendering the computer unusable. Nasty.

On the other hand you get viruses like Melissa which don't actually harm your computer in any way. Melissa was an email virus that self-replicated by sending copies of itself to every entry in an address book. End users weren't affected much, but the email servers that had to deal with the increase in traffic nearly folded under the pressure.

The bottom line is that you shouldn't make any assumptions about a virus. There are some very reliable sources of information out there and you should always consult these first. Check out Symantec's site (***www.symantec.com/avcenter***), F-Secure Virus Info Centre (***www.datafellows.com/v-descs***) and the Anti-Virus Community (***www.icsa.net/html/communities/antivirus***).

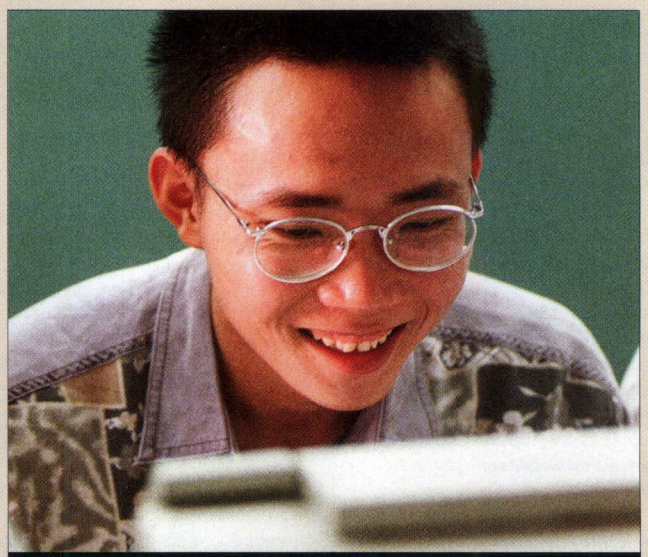
HOW TO HANDLE THEM

Probably the single greatest reason for the spreading of viruses is that people simply don't know when they've got one. Whether it's because they believe they'll never get infected or whether they're just new to computers and viruses, these are the sort of folks that come off

THE TOP VIRUSES EXPLAINED

THE ENEMY WITHIN»

They're changing all the time, but here we give a nastiness rating to some of the viruses that are doing the most damage at the moment.



Chen Ing-Hau, delighted to have created meltdown with another Chernobyl

>MAGISTRATE ★★★★★

Snappy name, very nasty virus, especially if you're involved in the practice of law. Does all sorts of stuff, up to and including flashing your system BIOS, emailing everyone in your address book and zapping the message 'You think you are God, but you are only a chunk of shit' up on screen.

>KOURNIKOVA ★★★★☆

Cleverly playing on the name of the Russian tennis star, this email virus has caused huge damage. When executed, the virus emails itself to everyone in the Microsoft Outlook address book and attempts to direct your Web browser to an Internet address in the Netherlands – its homeland.

>NAVIDAD ★★☆☆☆

Proof that virus authors aren't just nasty, they're stupid too – this one's so badly coded it does more damage by accident than design. It attacks your MAPI email client (Outlook, Outlook Express etc) and then threatens to nuke your hard drive. It doesn't, but run it on the wrong operating system and it could screw things up anyway.

>BYMER ★★☆☆☆

More a proof of effect than an actual virus, Bymer is a worm written in a high-level language. It checks for shared directories on a network and copies itself to the targeted drive. And that's about it – it doesn't do anything nasty beyond replicating rapidly.

>HYBRIS ★★★☆☆

This widely-spread virus is another worm – a virus that spread by email attachment. Hybris modifies your system's Wsock32.dll file and in this way can monitor all incoming and outdoing Internet traffic. When it spots an email address, it waits for two minutes and then sends itself to the same recipient.

>W95-MTX ★★★★☆

This is a combination worm and virus that attempts to circumvent your anti-virus software. It goes through the usual email address book routine then deploys a virus which directs your browser to a specific Web site which downloads plug-ins to cause more damage. A tricky and difficult-to-defeat virus, though thankfully rare.

>CHERNOBYL ★★★★★

Also known as CIH, the initials of its author Chen Ing-Hau. This is a really nasty virus that you should steer clear of. If deployed it erases the entire hard drive by writing a stream of random data to the hard drive and then attempts to screw the system BIOS, making it impossible to even start your PC. Chernobyl has the potential to render your entire system useless, so approach with caution.

worst when a virus springs up.

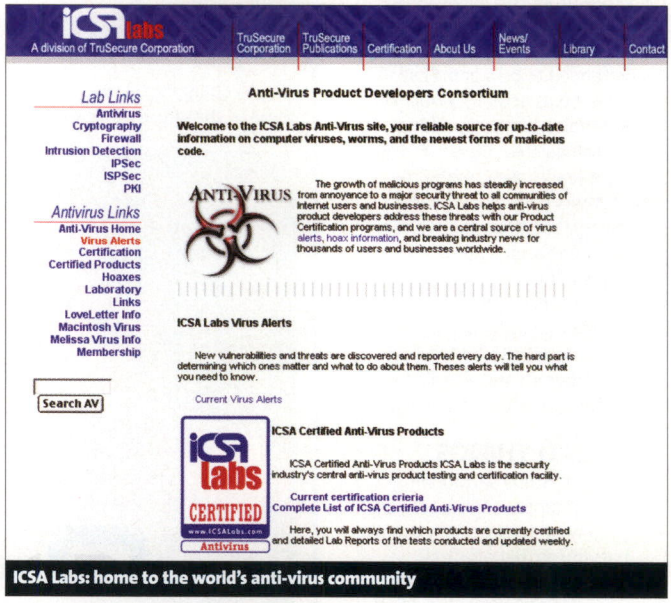
So the first step is to get yourself a decent virus detection application. We've tested the three most popular PC ones for you (see below) – so pick the one that best meets your criteria and install it on all your PCs. Secondly – keep your virus definitions up to date. Schedule your virus application to download new definitions in the evenings and at weekends so that you're always on top of any potential threat.

Though prevention is better than cure, many people only do anything about virus infection when it's already happened. Fortunately all is still not lost, even if a virus has grabbed your computer by the nether regions. Many of the nastier viruses (such as CIH and PrettyPark) have their very own special killer applications. You can find them all at ***www.download.com*** – just search by virus name.

Finally, while viruses are a very real threat, you shouldn't let them stop you using the Internet productively or from having fun online. As long as you keep your virus definitions current, as long as you're aware that not all virus warnings are legitimate and as long as you don't take the attitude that it'll never happen to you, you'll be fine.

WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

Modern operating systems aren't totally secure constructions, but you do have to work fairly hard to get a virus on one. The fact is that you, the end user, have to be complicit in the arrival of the virus on your hard drive. You might not know it, but you could have introduced a virus to your system by clicking on an innocuous-looking file.


ICSA labs
A division of TruSecure Corporation
TruSecure Corporation
TruSecure Publications
Certification
About Us
News/ Events
Library
Contact
Lab Links
Antivirus
Cryptography
Firewall
Intrusion Detection
IPSec
ISPSec
PKI
Antivirus Links
Anti-Virus Home
Virus Alerts
Certification
Certified Products
Hoaxes
Laboratory
Links
LoveLetter Info
Macintosh Virus
Melissa Virus Info
Membership
Search AV
Anti-Virus Product Developers Consortium
Welcome to the ICSA Labs Anti-Virus site, your reliable source for up-to-date information on computer viruses, worms, and the newest forms of malicious code.
ANTI-VIRUS
The growth of malicious programs has steadily increased from annoyance to a major security threat to all communities of Internet users and businesses. ICSA Labs helps anti-virus product developers address these threats with our Product Certification programs, and we are a central source of virus alerts, hoax information, and breaking industry news for thousands of users and businesses worldwide.
ICSA Labs Virus Alerts
New vulnerabilities and threats are discovered and reported every day. The hard part is determining which ones matter and what to do about them. Theses alerts will tell you what you need to know.
Current Virus Alerts
ICSA Certified Anti-Virus Products
ICSA Certified Anti-Virus Products ICSA Labs is the security industry's central anti-virus product testing and certification facility.
Current certification criteria
Complete List of ICSA Certified Anti-Virus Products
Here, you will always find which products are currently certified and detailed Lab Reports of the tests conducted and updated weekly.
CERTIFIED
www.ICSALabs.com
Antivirus
ICSA Labs: home to the world's anti-virus community

Don't let viruses stop you having fun online

The basic rules are clear. Never open email attachments from people you don't know. And even if you do know the person that's sent you an email attachment, get in touch with them first to make sure that it's a legitimate file and not a worm that's hijacked your friend's address book. And even then, you should still scan the attachment with an up-to-date virus sweeper.

All the best anti-virus applications can sweep all files that appear on your computer as they appear – so use this. Don't assume that the floppy disk or zip disk your colleague gave you is virus-free – even if their computer isn't yet showing any symptoms, there may be something nasty lurking in the boot sector.

Many computers have BIOS level anti-virus protection, so make sure yours is turned on – consult the handbook that came with your PC (usually you just have to hit the Delete key during start-up to enter the setup options). Be aware and you'll stay virus-free.

I'M INFECTED!

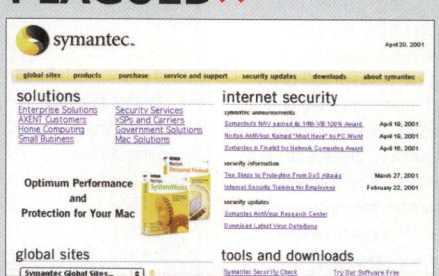
If all else fails and a virus does somehow find its way onto your system, the first rule is not to panic. If you have anti-virus software on your PC (which you must, of course, keep up to date) use it. Run a full system scan – this may take some time as it analyses every single file on your computer, but let it do its job. If it finds the virus, follow the on-screen instructions to get rid of it.

If you haven't got any anti-virus software then get down the shops and buy some. Now! Some of these anti-virus suites come with a boot disk which you can insert into the floppy disk drive and reboot and which will check your system. If you were prepared then you will probably have been asked to create three back-up floppy disks for just such an eventuality – bung the first one in your PC and reboot and follow the instructions.

If you have access to another PC then get on the Internet and head over to Symantec's anti-virus centre (***www.symantec.com/avcenter***). They have kindly produced several specialised removal programs which are available for free download and will probably get rid of your pesky virus. Download the file, bung it on a floppy and run it on the infected machine (binning the floppy disk afterwards). The chances of any real damage, remember, are minimal...

YOUR AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE

PROGRAMS FOR THE PLAGUED>>



NAME	WEB SITE	PRICE	SCANS EMAILS?	SCANS SYSTEM?	SCANS DOWNLOADS?	LIVE UPDATES?	EASE OF USE	OVERALL SCORE
NORTON ANTI-VIRUS	***www.symantec.com***	£30	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	3/5	★★★★☆
One of the most popular anti-virus packages on the market, Symantec always makes sure that its virus definitions are up-to-date. We like the fact that you're prompted to download new virus definitions, but the interface is rather utilitarian. The networking features make it ideal for office environments.								
SAV	***www.sophos.com***	£95	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/5	★★★☆☆
It's got a fairly lousy interface, but the important thing about Sophos Anti-virus is its hunting abilities and in this area it excels. Equally at home on the family PC or on a corporate network, Sophos can monitor all drives, downloads and network shares. You only get 12 months of updates, though, and it's very pricey.								
VIRUSSCAN	***www.mcafee.com***	£25	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4/5	★★★★★
This anti-virus suite covers every eventuality in an unfussy way. The package is pitched at home users (hence the pricing) and features a tremendous interface. If there's a problem with it, it's that it doesn't prompt you to download update definitions, so it's easy to fall behind. Specific Java protection's a bonus.								

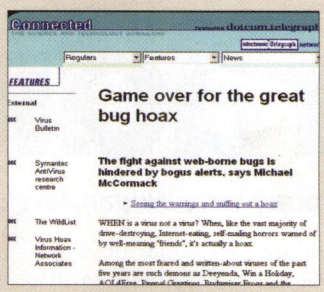
DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ

VIRUS FACT AND FICTION>>

There's no doubt that viruses are pernicious little blighters, capable of causing wanton destruction on a global level. Moreover, the press love a good virus story. But does this reporting blur the reality of virus attack?

Are the press guilty, as they often are in other areas, of sensationalising the subject matter to make their column inches more readable? We surveyed a variety of reports to assess their hype factor...

BBC HOMEPAGE | WORLD SERVICE | EDUCATION
low graphics version | feedback | help
BBC NEWS
You are in: Sci/Tech
Front Page
World
UK
UK Politics
Business
Sci/Tech
Health
Education
Entertainment
Talking Point
In Depth
AudioVideo
BBC SPORT
BBC Weather
Friday, 5 May, 2000, 14:21 GMT 15:21 UK
Are computer viruses unstoppable?
VIRUS
By BBC News Online's Damian Carrington
The flurry of "ILOVEYOU" e-mails bouncing around the world has spectacularly failed to increase the peace for computer users.
Sally Watson, Silicon.com "There is no way of stopping viruses" real 28k
And network managers face further torment as the relatively simple code of the virus is tweaked. Anti-virus company Symantec has already spotted 10 mutations and expects dozens more.
Internet Consultant
The Love Bug, as it has
If we remember what
Search BBC News Online
GO
Advanced search options
Launch console for latest audio/video
BBC RADIO NEWS
BBC ONE TV NEWS
WORLD NEWS SUMMARY
BBC NEWS 24 BULLETIN
PROGRAMMES GUIDE
COMPUTER VIRUS MENACE
Click below for key stories and features
Features:
Are viruses unstoppable?
Hunting e-criminals
Why write computer viruses?
Virus hall of infamy
Q&A: The Love Bug
Key Stories:


Connected
FEATURES
Game over for the great bug hoax
The fight against web-borne bugs is hindered by bogus alerts, says Michael McCormack

>'ARE COMPUTER VIRUSES UNSTOPPABLE?'

BBC News Online 5/5/00

news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/sci/tech/newsid_737000/737396.stm

Even the sober old BBC is capable of sensationalising a story in order to draw in the readers. The reporter talks to various people at Microsoft who are accused of embedding the tools in their software that enables the virus authors to do their work. But nowhere in the article is the wholly dumb question posed in the headline answered. The reason for this is, of course, that viruses are very stoppable – they are just computer code and code, in whatever form, can be spotted and defeated.

>'GAME OVER FOR THE GREAT BUG HOAX'

Telegraph – Connected – 4/2/99

www.telegraph.co.uk

The folks at *The Telegraph*'s Connected section have always been clued up and it was nice to find this well-written article about viruses. As the reporter notes, the vast majority of virus alerts are completely bogus and these tend to waste more of everyone's time than the real thing. The big problem, and one that's often fuelled by the media, is that there's so much hype surrounding viruses that people tend to react totally out of proportion when they get wind of one.

>'VIRUS THAT INFECTS WINDOWS AND LINUX IDENTIFIED'

CNN – 28/3/01

www.cnn.com/2001/TECH/internet/03/28/virus.winux.02/index.html

We really liked this particular news item because it illustrates that it's possible to write about viruses without launching into 'we're all doomed' diatribes. The article refers to a 'proof of concept' virus that can infect both Linux and Windows-based operating systems. More importantly, once the reporter has outlined the details of the virus, he then says 'a check of alerts should be a daily ritual on the Web site of whatever anti-virus software users have on their computer.'

>'DON'T BELIEVE THE VIRUS HYPE'

Guardian Unlimited – 8/3/01

www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4148759,00.html

This extremely interesting article gets to the heart of the whole virus problem. The reporter paid a visit to a talk by David Perry, a leading computer virus expert, in which Perry said that the real problem about viruses was 'the problem of ignorance, of mistaken or misinformed action.' The article mentions that many viruses are hyped by the PR wings of the anti-virus companies. Virus writer vs anti-virus writer, working towards exactly the same goal – strange partnership or conspiracy theory?

>'COMPUTERS WIPED OUT BY "NAKED WIFE" VIRUS'

The Times – 8/3/01

www.thetimes.co.uk/article/0,,395831,00.html

Now this is a truly useless bit of writing. The tone is over-the-top, the details woolly at best and the article offers absolutely no advice on how best to deal with the virus. The journalist makes no mention of the fact that simply receiving the email puts you in no danger at all – just delete it and empty your email's waste bin and you will be unaffected, which is hardly likely to 'wipe out' anyone's system. He also makes alarmist claims about having to reinstall operating systems, while making absolutely no mention of which operating systems are infected or how seriously. Sensationalist writing at its worst.

CNN.com / SCI-TECH
MAINPAGE
WORLD
U.S.
WEATHER
BUSINESS
SPORTS
POLITICS
LAW
SCI-TECH
SPACE
HEALTH
ENTERTAINMENT
TRAVEL
CAREER
LOCAL
IN-DEPTH
Virus that infects Windows and Linux identified
March 28, 2001
Web posted at: 12:21 PM EST (1721 GMT)
In this story:
Not spreading yet
Routine anti-virus scan suggested
RELATED STORIES, SITES
ATLANTA, Georgia (CNN) -- Computer security experts have identified what they say is the first virus capable of infecting both the Windows and Linux computer operating systems.
W32.Winux is what's known as a "proof of concept" virus. The virus was sent to an anti-virus company, and it is not now causing any problems for computer users.
"It's a technical achievement within the virus writing community, in this case the ability to infect both Windows and Linux executable files," said Steven Sundermeier, product manager with the security company Central Command.
MESSAGE BOARD
Security on the Net

Build your own radio station

Forget Terry Wogan, forget Pete Tong – pack in the day job and broadcast to the world via the Internet

THE INTERNET HAS BROUGHT many things within the grasp of the common man – we can all publish books, we can run magazines, we can compete as equals with large corporations and multi-nationals, selling goods just like HMV, Waterstones or Tesco. We can even (whisper it) run our own radio stations. The Internet can fulfil all your dreams of joining Fab FM.

There are many reasons why Internet radio is a good thing, but perhaps the most important is that it brings equality to a final bastion of government control. In the real world, you need licences, a lot of equipment and vast reserves of cash to get on the air. On the Internet, however, all you need is you, possibly a few MP3s and a little bit of time to set it all up.

If the prospect of getting on-air interests you, then perhaps we should temper your enthusiasm a tiny bit. Live audio eats up a lot of bandwidth – consider for a moment how much is required just to listen to a live broadcast and you'll get some idea how much you'll need to broadcast. So there's a basic rule about this – if you've got a modem you'll have to pre-record shows; if you've got a broadband connection you can broadcast live to a limited number of people and if you've got a really fat Internet pipe then you can broadcast live to the world in 14 different languages.

myplay
THE DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION COMPANY
CORPORATE OVERVIEW
SERVICES
CLIENT EXAMPLES
PRESS ROOM
CONTACT US
LET MYPLAY HELP YOU CREATE THE
digital music subscriptions
THAT YOUR CUSTOMERS WILL PAY FOR
WHAT WE DO
WHY CHOOSE MYPLAY?
ACCESS YOUR LOCKER
"...digital music... will generate annual revenues of $3 billion within 3 years."
– Webnoize Research, Winter 2000
We help you create digital music subscriptions
We host your private-labeled music Locker™
We provide customized back-end solutions
More than 5 million registered users since 1999
We do it all -- from clearing the licenses to streaming the tracks.
e-mail:
password:
SUBMIT >>
Auto Sign In Next Time
Not a Member? Sign Up Here!
Myplay: the easiest way to share music with the world

BUDGET BROADCASTING

Okay, so all you've got is a 56k modem and a standard ISP dial-up – you can still get your own radio show on the air. You do this by creating your shows at home (the principle advantage being that you can edit mistakes out before you broadcast) and you then upload your show to some server space. This being the Internet, all the tools you'll require are close at hand.

The streaming audio format most people are familiar with is Real Audio (***www.real.com***), but what you may not know is that the .RAM files produced for Real Player can be downloaded in one chunk for later playback. Those .RAM files, uploaded to any run of the mill server (even your free Web space), will stream just fine – just be careful that you don't use up all of your ISP's bandwidth in the process.

Real: the daddy of online broadcasting

The basic version of Real Producer – the program that's used to create the .RAM files – is free. This only offers mono playback, but that would be perfectly fine for an all-talk show anyway. Alternatively, check out the 120-day trial of Real Producer 8.0, which enables you to create streaming multimedia and incorporate Real Audio and Video live and on demand into your site.

On the Internet, all you need is a few MP3s and a bit of time to broadcast

Windows comes complete with a small application called Sound Recorder, which you can use to produce sound files. Alternatively, check out Sound Forge 5, which will output sound in all the popular streaming audio formats. If you'd like to be able to let others listen to your MP3s, then aim for MyPlay (***www.myplay.com***), upload your favourite tracks and anyone anywhere will be able to listen in.

THE PROFESSIONAL APPROACH

If you're lucky enough to have a cable modem or a DSL Internet connection then you might have been wondering what to do with all that bandwidth. With the Shoutcast plug-in for Winamp and the services of the Shoutcast network you can get your very own full-blown Internet station up and running with absolutely no fuss at all.

Shoutcast enables people with a decent amount of bandwidth to broadcast in high quality streaming audio. All anyone needs to tune in is Winamp (***www.winamp.com***). The Shoutcast network acts as a kind of dating agency, matching listeners with broadcasters.

Setting up your own Shoutcast radio station is perfectly easy, as long as you follow the instructions set out by the folks at Winamp. It's fair to say, however, that you'll need a certain degree of Windows knowledge to get up and running.

If you find the Shoutcast approach a bit off-putting, then our friends at Real Audio (***www.real.com***) are definitely worth a look. Combine Real Audio's tried and tested streaming format with the I-Mix MP3 program by Acoustica (***www.real.com/accessories/audiomix***) and you'll be DJing by tea-time. This cool program enables you to mix multiple audio files together and is designed for anyone who wants to

Internet radio: perfect for talk... and more talk

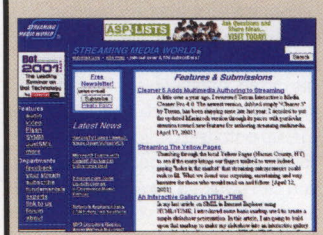
create Internet broadcast audio. One word of warning, though – if you intend to use any copyrighted music, contact the Performing Rights Society first to check the current legislation and see whether you need to purchase a licence.

LISTEN UP...

Without a shadow of a doubt the most important aspect of Internet radio is the massive variety. If you've ever flicked from station to station searching for something to listen to then you'll appreciate the fact that there are already over 30,000 Internet radio stations running live. Point your web browser at Live365 (***www.live365.com***), for example, and you'll find plenty of inspiration to get yourself online.

If you want to sample the potential opposition, or just get a general flavour of what's available online at the moment, try Radio-Locator (***www.radio-locator.com***), which lists the overwhelming majority of online broadcasts and is searchable by genre or location.

ESSENTIAL SITES FOR DIGITAL DJS



STREAMING MEDIA WORLD

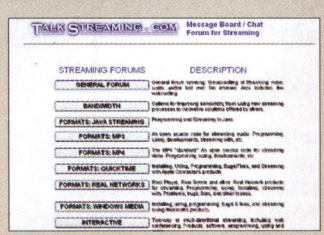
www.streamingmediaworld.com

A great central resource for all wannabe DJs. We like it, however, because it's a great news source – if it's happening in audio, you'll hear it here first.

STREAMING LIST

www.streaminglist.com

Similar to SMW, but the emphasis here is much more on Web links. The site covers every facet of streaming entertainment from the home user to high-end business propositions.



TALK STREAMING

www.talkstreaming.com

A discussion site for anyone involved in streaming audio onto the Internet. All the popular formats, from Real Audio to Quicktime, are covered, along with more advanced stuff.

AKOO

www.akoo.com

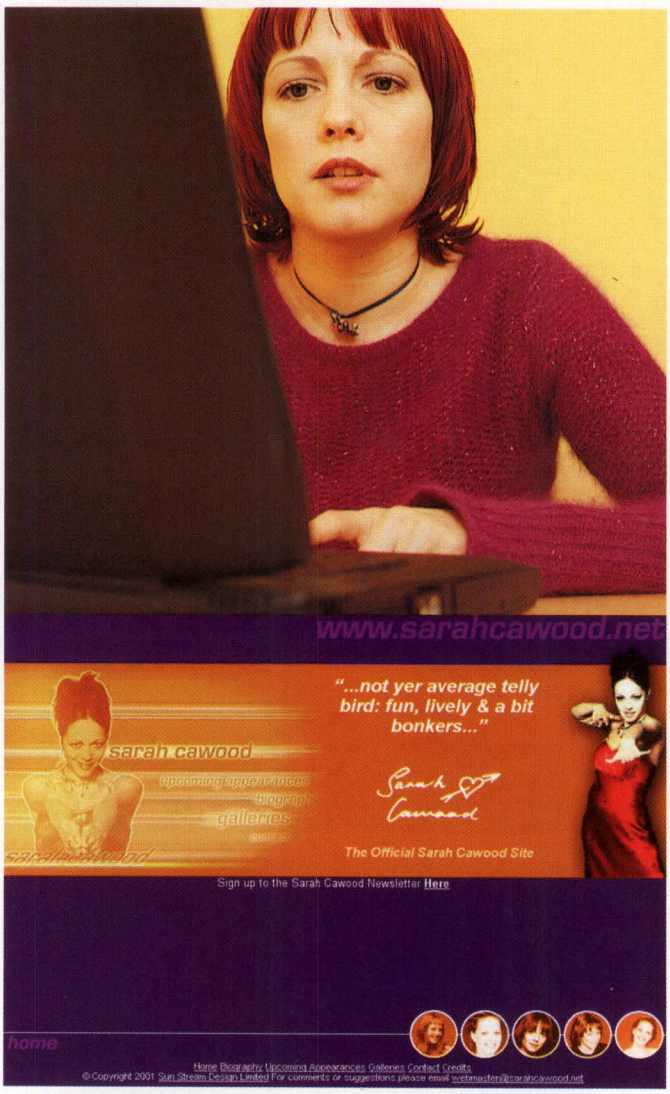
A great place to look if you're labouring under the idea that streaming audio is a minority interest. This search engine will enable you to tap into the vast number of stations out there.

PICTURES: BBC

Making movies

Continuing our series on simple Web design tips – how to make your site come alive by adding video

Over the last few months we've seen the site we constructed for TV starlet Sarah Cawood come alive. We've built the basic navigation, we've added a photo gallery and we've enlivened everything with Flash animations. And while sites like Sarah's are a great resource for fans, they're also perfect for people in the business to catch up with her or to check her out with a view to hiring her services. And what finer way to see what Sarah's capable of than to view her show-reel...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LIGHTS, CAMERA, INTERACTION

Streaming video is a thorny area. Unless you've got a half decent connection then you'll find the data stream has to keep resynchronising because your modem can't keep up. Fortunately today's streaming video players can automatically adapt to the different real-world conditions and drop the size or quality of the image to cope with lag and lack of bandwidth.

There are a wide variety of streaming video formats out there, but the most popular are Windows Media, Real Player and QuickTime. The principal problem is that there's no real standard and so end users usually have to download all three players to stay compatible with all the streaming sites.

The other problem with streaming video is that it requires an awful lot of bandwidth at the server end, much more than most standard Internet accounts can offer. If you've produced something you think lots of people will want to see then you're going to need a full blown streaming video server and that costs money. Fortunately for us, those nice people at Online Concerts (***www.onlineconcerts.com***) have allowed us to house Sarah's site on their Web space.

Sunstream, the design agency behind Sarah's site, have had quite a bit of involvement in producing streaming video for the Internet, most recently for a couple of rock bands – Cradle of Filth (not a boy band) and W.A.S.P. – so the logistics of converting Sarah's show-reel into an Internet-friendly format presented no significant problem.

READY RECKONER

Streaming Internet content comes from one of two sources, both of which are treated in the same way. Ordinary VHS tape (both analogue and digital) or the more professional SP Beta tapes both have to get converted into a digital format, all of which requires a video capture card – Sunstream use an Osprey model.

You can capture the video and audio at the same time or individually, depending upon the kind of quality you're after. In Sarah's case both video and audio were captured at the same time, because we're dealing with a show-reel, not music content. During the capturing process the hardware automatically encodes the video with the Windows Media Encoder. It is possible to use a huge range of encoders, such as Real Player, but WME is the most widely used. Before you encode, check with your Web server administrators to see which formats they support.

Once the capture card has done its magic, you end up with a single file called an ASF. This is the actual streaming file, which Sunstream will FTP up onto the Online Concerts server. As the tech bods pointed out, you can't upload an ASF file to just any server because you need a specific Windows plug-in to be running on the server. If your ISP has that capability then you can stream it.

LIVE AND ON DEMAND

While online video content tends to get filed under a single 'streaming' umbrella, it's worth noting that there are two specific varieties – broadcast and on-demand.

VIDEO CAPTURE HARDWARE

THE KIT YOU'LL NEED>>

In order to get video footage onto your computer you're going to need some sort of capture device. Obviously there are some terrifyingly expensive professional capture products out there, but equally there are some superb products pitched squarely at the home or amateur user. These products, aimed at video enthusiasts, are often capable of giving the pro products a run for their money.

Many standard AGP graphics cards have some sort of video capture facility built-in. If you've got an ATi card, including any of the All-In-One range then you'll have a composite video input lead on the back of your card which will enable you to record from any video source. And while this is fine for recording the odd bit of footage, if you'd like to produce something slicker (possibly for re-editing or for professional purposes) then you need a capture card.

The finest capture cards produced for home users are the Pinnacle range of products. We can particularly recommend the Studio DV package (£76, details from *www.pinnaclesys.com*) which utilises the same Firewire interface you'll find on most modern camcorders. With its superb software you can plug in your camcorder to your PC, control the camera, capture your footage, edit it, add effects and then output it again.

Using a video capture card lets you convert your video into a Web-friendly format and edit it for online viewing

Online Concerts: hosting Sarah's show-reel, and plenty of other videos

Many Net accounts just can't handle online video

Sunstream have set up Sarah's show-reel in an on-demand format, which means that people going to the site will see it from the beginning every time they request it. If it was in a broadcast format then they would see the show-reel half way through.

So the video's captured, the ASF file has been uploaded and now we need to take one more step. Once you have your ASF file you then create something called an ASX file – a pointing file which is all the end user sees and which hides the location of the ASF file. The ASX file serves as a front end to your ASF file, and enables you to include advertising.

So, when you pay a visit to Sarah's site and click on the show-reel, your browser sees an ASX file which looks up the ASF file on the American server. All things being equal, your media player should kick in and the video should start playing.

SEE FOR YOURSELF AT
www.sarahcawood.net
Keep checking back for the latest developments
Find out more about Sunstream at *www.sunstream.co.uk*

SOFTWARE FOR ONLINE VIDEO

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS»

Generally speaking the best video editing software is the package that came with your capture card, because it has been designed specifically for it. However you may decide you'd like some more features from your software. The packages we can recommend include Ulead Video Studio 5 (*www.ulead.com/vs/runme.htm*) and MGI MediaSuite (*www.mgisoft.com*). Alternatively, if you have Windows ME or XP then you'll already have some software, in the shape of Windows Movie Maker already installed. You can find an online tutorial on the subject at *www.moviemac.com/create_movies/shooting_video.html*.

Q&A

Whatever your technological gripe, our ever-willing team of Net experts always have the answers at their fingertips

The sender of the month's Good Question wins a Casio TV1800 Pocket Television, worth £129.99

GEEKS FOR HIRE

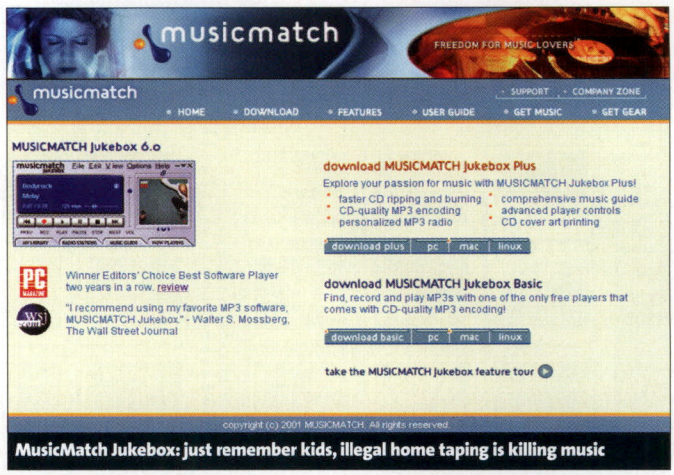
I've been trying to find an independent computer programmer/Web wizard to help me write programs on my home PC and to carry out other software tasks, but I can never seem to find any decent sites or noticeboards with experienced, skilled people (independent of any companies) offering their services at a reasonable rate. Where do you recommend I find them?
BOB BENNETT, LONDON

You could do worse than try the magnificently-named Rent-a-Geek, at ***www.rentageek.com***. It's an American site, but there are plenty of freelance programmers registered and working in the UK accessible through its files. Do be warned, though, that good coders do not come cheap – their services are very much in demand and they charge premium rates. So here's an alternative: Usenet, that home to tens of thousands of newsgroups, available via most ISPs, is chock-a-block with the sort of nerds you need. Whatever it is you use your computer for, find a newsgroup that's discussing that topic (believe us, there'll be one), introduce yourself (be polite – and humble) and ask for help. There's a good chance you'll get some advice for free, or at the very least be pointed in the direction of someone who'll be prepared to knock something together for you on the cheap.

RIP IT UP

Can you recommend the best free CD ripping software? I've heard that MusicMatch works well.
ANDREW BOWLES, BOLTON

'Ripping' a CD is geek-speak for the burning of data, such as a bunch of MP3 files, onto a CD-ROM. And yes, MusicMatch Jukebox should do a fine job, for ripping CDs and maintaining your digital music archive, converting formats (from MP3 to .wav, for example), playing back your tunes and setting up track listings. Thankfully, it's free to download, at ***www.musicmatch.com***. There are plenty more fish in the sea, however – the CD-ripping archive at cnet.com contains 98 different free programs, complete with brief descriptions, download statistics and recommendations from other users. They're free, so keep trying them out until you find one that's right for you. Isn't the Internet a marvellous thing?



MusicMatch Jukebox: just remember kids, illegal home taping is killing music

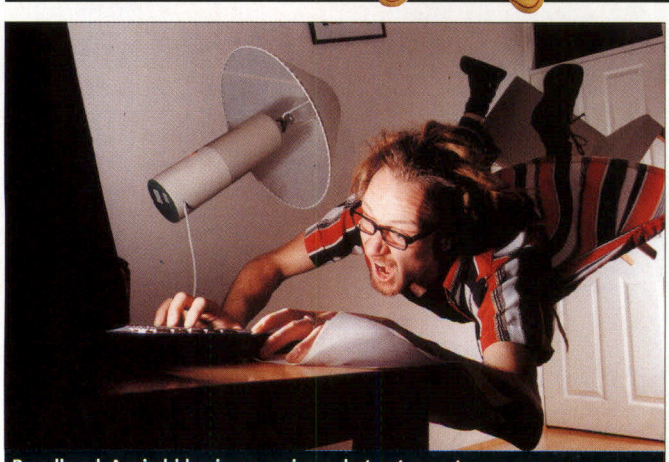
YOU'VE NO AUTHORITY

Please can someone tell me why I'm getting the following messages: 'You are not authorised to view this page' and 'http 403 forbidden'. This happens on pages that I visit regularly and have had no problems with in the past. I'm getting ill with frustration!
MARTIN STOREY, BRISTOL

After the dreaded 404 ('page not found'), 403 must be the second-most common error message encountered by Web surfers. It means, quite simply, 'access denied'. The page is still there – you just aren't being allowed to view it. There are a couple of reasons why this could be happening. Have you changed your ISP or modem connection recently? Some sites detect where you're dialling in from, and if you've got a new service provider they may no longer 'recognise' you. Other sites require you to visit them on a regular basis, and if you haven't dropped in for a while you might have been erased from their user databases. Alternatively, your browser might have accidentally wiped its cookies – the small pieces of code you download from the Net that can identify you to a particular site. In all cases, the solution is the same: rather than attempt to load that specific page of a site you've added to your list of favourites, go the long way round, via the home page, re-registering if necessary. Once you're back in, add the page to your favourites once more, being sure to delete the old version. It's long-winded, perhaps, but it should work.

THIS MONTH'S VIRUS

I've recently had a problem or two with everyone's favourite companion, the virus. This is mainly due to the people I let use my computer. However, the virus scanner I've been using, AVG, seems to be very good – but I notice you never mention it,


Broadband: A mind-blowing experience, but not open to everyone

Q&A GOOD QUESTION

I'M STILL WAITING...

I've recently upgraded my computer to 256Mb of RAM, but it still doesn't work that fast on the Net. Could it be my modem? I've heard a lot about these new ADSL broadband services – would subscribing to one of them make a difference?
SAMANTHA, VIA EMAIL

You can never have enough RAM, the chip-based, reusable 'memory space' from which your computer's programs run. The more RAM you have, the quicker your software will perform. That said, 256Mb is plenty for the home PC, so the tardiness must be down to your dial-up connection. If, like most, you operate a 56K modem via a copper-wire phone line, you'll know the frustration of waiting for flashy graphics or bulky files to download. Broadband services like ADSL, however, promise speeds up to 40 times that of most modems. The downsides are that not all of the country can get connected, waiting lists can stretch into months, and there are both installation and monthly subscription charges. Call your phone company to see if broadband is available, or check The Net's ISP News (p100).

WORDS: MATTHEW BINGHAM; PICTURES: STEVE ORINO, GETTY IMAGES/STONE

recommending the likes of McAfee instead. Is AVG considered second-rate? Am I leaving myself open to a mutitude of obscure little viruses?
NEIL JACKSON, BELFAST

It's unlikely your PC is about to be buried in rogue programs, because AVG is a perfectly good virus-checker, available for free download at ***www.grisoft.com***. Do bear in mind, however, that any virus-checker is only as good as its last upgrade. That's because these smart pieces of programming sample the code of any software you download or attempt to install, looking for the telltale sequences employed by virus

AVG: A v.g. killer if it's kept updated

writers. But if some malicious individual comes up with a brand-new virus, your ageing checker might not recognise it – and the program gets through. So update your software as often as possible: AVG offers an upgrade every month, while some sophisticated, paid-for packages – like good old McAfee – will automatically check their home sites for the latest info every time you go online. See p108 for a full explanation of viruses and virus scanners.

IT'S ALL GEEK TO ME

I am very new to this computer/Internet thing, but that doesn't stop me from having plans to set up and run a business on the Net. I know the domain name I want is available – but that, I'm afraid, is as far as I've got. The problem is that terms like 'hosting' and 'mail forwarding' mean nothing to me. All I want is the domain name of my choice and to be able to update my Web site whenever I need to, day or night. What do you advise?
PAUL PEACOCK, STREATHAM, LONDON

First things first: register your domain name before someone else does. It shouldn't cost you more than a tenner for the rights for a couple of years, and it doesn't commit you to having to use any one company to put your Web site online. Which, incidentally, is what 'hosting' is – the process where the HTML and graphics that make up your Web site are stored on a company's computers and put up by them on the Net for all to see. Many ISPs offer free 'Web space', which effectively means that they'll host your site, but if you're planning to run a business online you'll be better off paying a commercial provider to do the job. Try UUNet (***www.uu.net***), which specialises in hosting sites for small businesses, or any of the other business ISPs in The Net's Top 50 ranking on page 98. These companies offer facilities like access to a secure server (so you can conduct financial transactions online) and 'mail forwarding'. The latter means that they'll intercept email addressed to your domain name – anything ending '@johnsmith.co.uk', or whatever – and forward it on to you. As for updating your Web site, you can do this any time of the day; once you've created your changes on your own machine, you simply upload them to the host's computer.

COME AND MEET US

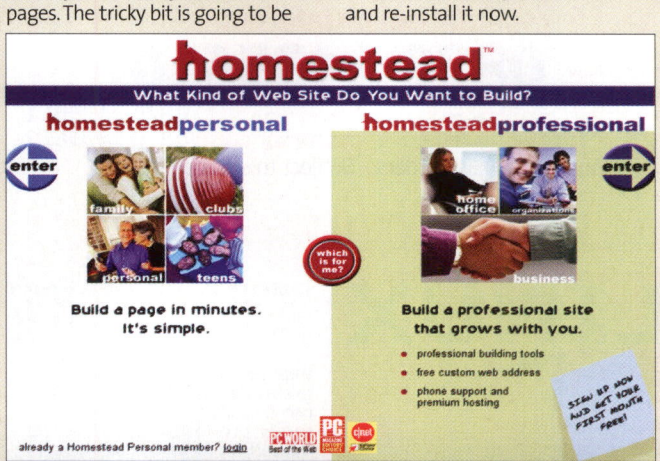
Want to meet the net's team of experts in the flesh? Then come to Live 2001, the UK's biggest and best consumer electronics show. It hits the Birmingham NEC from 21-23 September, so put the date in your diary now – or you could always visit the show's site at *www.livexpo.co.uk*.

UUNet: Hosts with the most for small businesses across the globe

QUICK QUESTION TIME. FINGERS ON THE BUZZERS...

FAQs

>My site's been growing for just over four months now, and has racked up a good few hits. My biggest problem is getting people to come back to the site, but I've come up with a potential solution: including a Java-based game menu. The only thing is that I don't know how to implement it using Homestead (my Web design tool). Could you lend a hand?
JD, VIA EMAIL
Java is a clever little piece of multimedia software that runs on any computer or browser. There's no problem in uploading Java scripts to Homestead (***www.homestead.com***), which is an easy-to-use site that allows you to build your own Web pages. The tricky bit is going to be



Homestead: Proof that you should keep the personal and the professional separate

writing the Java code in the first place: it's a serious program used by professional Web designers, and not the easiest to master. Still, if you're game, the experience of learning Java could stand you in very good stead if you ever want to work in the industry. A good way to learn is through the online tutorials at ***java.sun.com/docs/books/tutorial*** – written, appropriately enough, in Java itself. If they don't scare you senseless, there are links to download the various tools you'll need to write and compile your Java scripts. It's all free – so good luck! And if it's all too much, the good news is that there are plenty of free examples of Java 'applets' on the Internet, one of which might be appropriate for you.

>Please help! I've been using the Internet for some time now with no real difficulties, but over the last couple of months I've come across a problem I just cannot seem to solve. Whenever I try to download anything, I'm told that 'There is no viewer available'. I'm then asked if I want to download 'DirectX', but when I agree I'm sent to sites that don't seem to exist.
NIGEL, VIA EMAIL
DirectX is a widget built in to Microsoft Windows that allows online multimedia applications, like sound and movies, to play to their highest quality, whatever exotic species of PC hardware you're using. Your version seems to have been corrupted and needs to be replaced. Don't wait to be directed to some site that no longer offers the software for download; go straight to the horse's mouth at the Microsoft site – ***www.microsoft.com/directx*** – and re-install it now.

>I've been unable to log in to my Hotmail account for about a week. Every time I get the message that the site is experiencing technical difficulties or that I need to check my browser settings. My browser settings are OK. I also get this message when I try to sign up for a new account at Hotmail and other free email providers. What am I doing wrong?
MICHAEL TANG, STOKE-ON-TRENT
Sorry to disagree, but it doesn't sound like your browser settings can be OK. Has the 'download cookies' function on your browser been disabled? Some Webmail sites require you to download a bit of software before they accept you, so if you've accidentally turned this function off, you don't get any mail. Try resetting your browser's preferences back to their defaults, or re-install your browser from scratch and see if that does the trick. Be sure to save your favourites first – read last month's Q&A to see how.

WoW

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:// Famous fans of the Web tell all

INTERVIEW: ALEX NEWBY; PICTURE: BBC PIC PUB

Vicki Butler-Henderson

The sassy *Top Gear* presenter says the Net revs her up rather than driving her round the bend

When did you discover the Internet?
I've been a freelance journalist for about three years now, and two years ago I bought an iMac because I wanted to get onto the Internet to send emails. As soon as I'd bought it, I hooked on to the Web.

Now that you've got the hang of the Net, what else do you use it for?
I look at my friends' Web sites, or use it for research. For example, if I can't get hold of the press office of a car manufacturer, I use it to look up statistics and other factual data.
I also use it to book flights for holidays and weekends away.

What do think the Internet has to offer driver on the street?
It's certainly the quickest and easiest way to access information; it's fast, fingertip info. And there are Web sites around that give prices of new cars, and mini tests and verdicts. So without having to go out and spend four quid on a magazine, drivers can get the cursory information that might lead them into making a quick decision about which model they're interested in.

Would you trust car reviews you saw posted on the Internet?
I think if you go with a big, respected name, you can expect and receive good, sound advice.

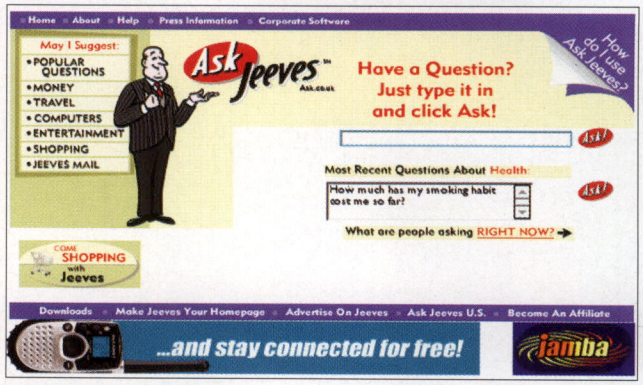
How safe do you think it is to actually buy a car via the Internet?
I've heard no horror stores about it, and I know that when you buy a car on the Internet it means you can have it delivered quicker than you would from a dealer. Also, invariably it is cheaper to buy on the Internet, particularly with imported cars. Personally, I wouldn't say rush out and do it, because you don't get the chance to test drive the car yourself.

Apart from your weekly email to the Top Gear WebClub, have you got any plans for the Internet?
I'd like to put up my own Web site, but I'm not sure yet exactly what it would have on it. That's something I don't really have time to think about at the moment!

You've already got two fan sites, *www.vb-h.net* and *vbh.cjb.net*. What do you think of those?
I just think it's terribly sweet that people take the time to do it.

Vicki Butler-Henderson contributes a weekly email to the Top Gear Web site (*www.topgear.beeb.com*)

VICKI'S PICK OF THE WEB



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Vicki's first port of call for any questions she needs answering.

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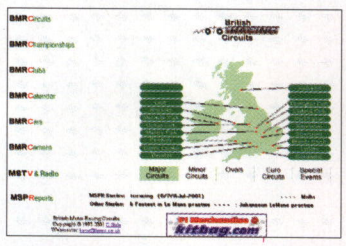
Where Vicki catches up with the news, but perhaps more importantly to her, the weather outlook – 'so I know if I'll be filming in the rain'.



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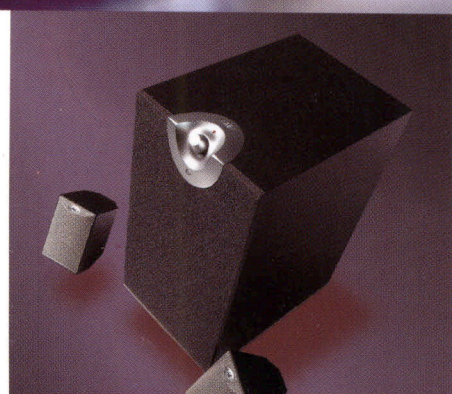

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